THE INDIAN DRUM

WILLIAM MacHARG
EDWIN BALMER

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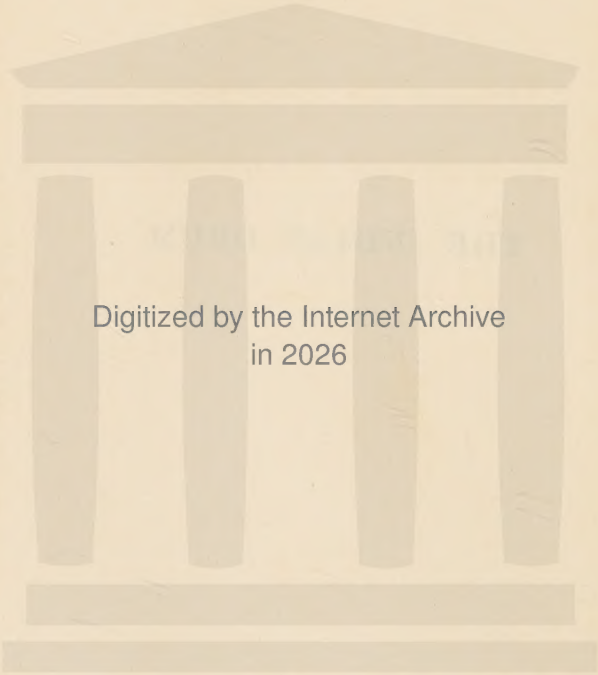

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THE INDIAN DRUM

BY

WILLIAM MAC HARG
AND
EDWIN BALMER

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THE INDIAN DRUM

CHAPTER I

THE MAN WHOM THE STORM HAUNTED

NEAR the northern end of Lake Michigan, where the bluff-bowed ore-carriers and the big, low-lying, wheat-laden steel freighters from Lake Superior push out from the Straits of Mackinac and dispute the right of way, in the island divided channel, with the white-and-gold, electric lighted, wireless equipped passenger steamers bound for Detroit and Buffalo, there is a copse of pine and hemlock back from the shingly beach. From this copse — dark, blue, primeval, silent at most times as when the Great Manitou ruled his inland waters — there comes at time of storm a sound like the booming of an old Indian drum. This drum beat, so the tradition says, whenever the lake took a life; and, as a sign perhaps that it is still the Manitou who rules the waters in spite of all the commerce of the cities, the drum still beats its roll for every ship lost on the lake, one beat for every life.

So — men say — they heard and counted the beatings of the drum to thirty-five upon the hour when, as afterward they learned, the great steel steamer *Wenota* sank with twenty-four of its crew and eleven passengers; so — men say — they heard the requiem

of the five who went down with the schooner *Grant;* and of the seventeen lost with the *Susan Hart;* and so of a score of ships more. Once only, it is told, has the drum counted wrong.

At the height of the great storm of December, 1895, the drum beat the roll of a sinking ship. One, two, three — the hearers counted the drum beats, time and again, in their intermitted booming, to twenty-four. They waited, therefore, for report of a ship lost with twenty-four lives; no such news came. The new steel freighter *Miwaka,* on her maiden trip during the storm with twenty-five — not twenty-four — aboard never made her port; no news was ever heard from her; no wreckage ever was found. On this account, throughout the families whose fathers, brothers, and sons were the officers and crew of the *Miwaka,* there stirred for a time a desperate belief that one of the men on the *Miwaka* was saved; that somewhere, somehow, he was alive and might return. The day of the destruction of the *Miwaka* was fixed as December fifth by the time at which she passed the government lookout at the Straits; the hour was fixed as five o'clock in the morning only by the sounding of the drum.

The region, filled with Indian legend and with memories of wrecks, encourages such beliefs as this. To northward and to westward a half dozen warning lights — Ile-aux-Galets ("Skilligalee" the lake men call it), Waugaushance, Beaver, and Fox Islands — gleam spectrally where the bone-white shingle outcrops above the water, or blur ghostlike in the haze; on the dark knolls topping the glistening sand bluffs to northward, Chippewas and Ottawas, a century and a half ago, quarreled over the prisoners after the massacre at Fort

Mackinac; to southward, where other hills frown down upon Little Traverse Bay, the black-robed priests in their chapel chant the same masses their predecessors chanted to the Indians of that time. So, whatever may be the origin of that drum, its meaning is not questioned by the forlorn descendants of those Indians, who now make beadwork and sweet-grass baskets for their summer trade, or by the more credulous of the white fishermen and farmers; men whose word on any other subject would receive unquestioning credence will tell you they have heard the drum.

But at bottom, of course, this is only the absurdest of superstitions, which can affect in no way men who to-day ship ore in steel bottoms to the mills of Gary and carry gasoline-engine reaped and threshed wheat to the elevators of Chicago. It is recorded, therefore, only as a superstition which for twenty-years has been connected with the loss of a great ship.

. . . . . .

Storm — the stinging, frozen sleet-slash of the February norther whistling down the floe-jammed length of the lake — was assaulting Chicago. Over the lake it was a white, whirling maelstrom, obscuring at midafternoon even the lighthouses at the harbor entrance; beyond that, the winter boats trying for the harbor mouth were bellowing blindly at bay before the jammed ice, and foghorns and sirens echoed loudly in the city in the lulls of the storm.

Battering against the fronts of the row of club buildings, fashionable hotels, and shops which face across the narrow strip of park to the lake front in downtown Chicago, the gale swirled and eddied the sleet till all the wide windows, warm within, were frosted. So heavy

was this frost on the panes of the Fort Dearborn Club — one of the staidest of the down-town clubs for men — that the great log fires blazing on the open hearths added appreciable light as well as warmth to the rooms.

The few members present at this hour of the afternoon showed by their lazy attitudes and the desultoriness of their conversation the dulling of vitality which warmth and shelter bring on a day of cold and storm. On one, however, the storm had had a contrary effect. With swift, uneven steps he paced now one room, now another; from time to time he stopped abruptly by a window, scraped from it with finger nail the frost, stared out for an instant through the little opening he had made, then resumed as abruptly his nervous pacing with a manner so uneasy and distraught that, since his arrival at the club an hour before, none even among those who knew him best had ventured to speak to him.

There are, in every great city, a few individuals who from their fullness of experience in an epoch of the city's life come to epitomize that epoch in the general mind; when one thinks of a city or of a section of the country in more personal terms than its square miles, its towering buildings, and its censused millions, one must think of those individuals. Almost every great industry owns one and seldom more than one; that often enough is not, in a money sense, the predominant figure of his industry; others of his rivals or even of his partners may be actually more powerful than he; but he is the personality; he represents to the outsiders the romance and mystery of the secrets and early, naked adventures of the great achievement. Thus, to think of the great mercantile establishments of State Street is to think immediately of one man; another

very vivid and picturesque personality stands for the stockyards; another rises from the wheat pit; one more from the banks; one from the steel works. The man who was pacing restlessly and alone the rooms of the Fort Dearborn Club on this stormy afternoon was the man who, to most people, bodied forth the life underlying all other commerce thereabouts but the least known, the life of the lakes.

The lakes, which mark unmistakably those who get their living from them, had put their marks on him. Though he was slight in frame with a spare, almost ascetic leanness, he had the wiry strength and endurance of the man whose youth had been passed upon the water. He was very close to sixty now, but his thick, straight hair was still jet black except for a slash of pure white above one temple; his brows were black above his deep blue eyes. Unforgettable eyes, they were; they gazed at one directly with surprising, disconcerting intrusion into one's thoughts; then, before amazement altered to resentment, one realized that, though he was still gazing, his eyes were vacant with speculation — a strange, lonely withdrawal into himself. His acquaintances, in explaining him to strangers, said he had lived too much by himself of late; he and one man servant shared the great house which had been unchanged — and in which nothing appeared to have been worn out or have needed replacing — since his wife left him, suddenly and unaccountably, about twenty years before. At that time he had looked much the same as now; since then, the white slash upon his temple had grown a bit broader perhaps; his nose had become a trifle aquiline, his chin more sensitive, his well formed hands a little more slender. People

said he looked more French, referring to his father who was known to have been a skin-hunter north of Lake Superior in the '50s but who later married an English girl at Mackinac and settled down to become a trader in the woods of the North Peninsula, where Benjamin Corvet was born.

During his boyhood, men came to the peninsula to cut timber; young Corvet worked with them and began building ships. Thirty-five years ago, he had been only one of the hundreds with his fortune in the fate of a single bottom; but to-day in Cleveland, in Duluth, in Chicago, more than a score of great steamers under the names of various interdependent companies were owned or controlled by him and his two partners, Sherrill and young Spearman.

He was a quiet, gentle-mannered man. At times, however, he suffered from fits of intense irritability, and these of late had increased in frequency and violence. It had been noticed that these outbursts occurred generally at times of storm upon the lake, but the mere threat of financial loss through the destruction of one or even more of his ships was not now enough to cause them; it was believed that they were the result of some obscure physical reaction to the storm, and that this had grown upon him as he grew older.

To-day his irritability was so marked, his uneasiness so much greater than any one had seen it before, that the attendant whom Corvet had sent, a half hour earlier, to reserve his usual table for him in the grill —"The table by the second window"—had started away without daring to ask whether the table was to be set for one or more. Corvet himself had corrected

the omission: "For two," he had shot after the man. Now, as his uneven footsteps carried him to the door of the grill, and he went in, the steward, who had started forward at sight of him, suddenly stopped, and the waiter assigned to his table stood nervously uncertain, not knowing whether to give his customary greeting or to efface himself as much as possible.

The tables, at this hour, were all unoccupied. Corvet crossed to the one he had reserved and sat down; he turned immediately to the window at his side and scraped on it a little clear opening through which he could see the storm outside. Ten minutes later he looked up sharply but did not rise, as the man he had been awaiting — Spearman, the younger of his two partners — came in.

Spearman's first words, audible through the big room, made plain that he was late to an appointment asked by Corvet; his acknowledgment of this took the form of an apology, but one which, in tone different from Spearman's usual bluff, hearty manner, seemed almost contemptuous. He seated himself, his big, powerful hands clasped on the table, his gray eyes studying Corvet closely. As Corvet, without acknowling the apology, took the pad and began to write an order for both, Spearman interfered; he had already lunched; he would take only a cigar. The waiter took the order and went away.

When he returned, the two men were obviously in bitter quarrel. Corvet's tone, low pitched but violent, sounded steadily in the room, though his words were inaudible. The waiter, as he set the food upon the table, felt relief that Corvet's outburst had fallen on other shoulders than his.

It had fallen, in fact, upon the shoulders best able to bear it. Spearman — still called, though he was slightly over forty now, "young" Spearman — was the power in the great ship-owning company of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman. Corvet had withdrawn, during recent years, almost entirely from active life; some said the sorrow and mortification of his wife's leaving him had made him choose more and more the seclusion of his library in the big lonely house on the North Shore, and had given Spearman the chance to rise; but those most intimately acquainted with the affairs of the great ship-owning firm maintained that Spearman's rise had not been granted him but had been forced by Spearman himself. In any case, Spearman was not the one to accept Corvet's irritation meekly.

For nearly an hour, the quarrel continued with intermitted truces of silence. The waiter, listening, as waiters always do, caught at times single sentences.

"You have had that idea for some time?" he heard from Corvet.

"We have had an understanding for more than a month."

"How definite?"

Spearman's answer was not audible, but it more intensely agitated Corvet; his lips set; a hand which held his fork clasped and unclasped nervously; he dropped his fork and, after that, made no pretense of eating.

The waiter, following this, caught only single words. "Sherrill"— that, of course, was the other partner. "Constance"— that was Sherrill's daughter. The other names he heard were names of ships. But, as

the quarrel went on, the manners of the two men changed; Spearman, who at first had been assailed by Corvet, now was assailing him. Corvet sat back in his seat, while Spearman pulled at his cigar and now and then took it from his lips and gestured with it between his fingers, as he jerked some ejaculation across the table.

Corvet leaned over to the frosted window, as he had done when alone, and looked out. Spearman shot a comment which made Corvet wince and draw back from the window; then Spearman rose. He delayed, standing, to light another cigar deliberately and with studied slowness. Corvet looked up at him once and asked a question, to which Spearman replied with a snap of the burnt match down on the table; he turned abruptly and strode from the room. Corvet sat motionless.

The revulsion to self-control, sometimes even to apology, which ordinarily followed Corvet's bursts of irritation had not come to him; his agitation plainly had increased. He pushed from him his uneaten luncheon and got up slowly. He went out to the coat room, where the attendant handed him his coat and hat. He hung the coat upon his arm. The doorman, acquainted with him for many years, ventured to suggest a cab. Corvet, staring strangely at him, shook his head.

"At least, sir," the man urged, "put on your coat."

Corvet ignored him.

He winced as he stepped out into the smarting, blinding swirl of sleet, but his shrinking was not physical; it was mental, the unconscious reaction to some thought the storm called up. The hour was barely four o'clock, but so dark was it with the storm that the

shop windows were lit; motorcars, slipping and skidding up the broad boulevard, with headlights burning, kept their signals clattering constantly to warn other drivers blinded by the snow. The sleet-swept sidewalks were almost deserted; here or there, before a hotel or one of the shops, a limousine came to the curb, and the passengers dashed swiftly across the walk to shelter.

Corvet, still carrying his coat upon his arm, turned northward along Michigan Avenue, facing into the gale. The sleet beat upon his face and lodged in the folds of his clothing without his heeding it.

Suddenly he aroused. "One — two — three — four!" he counted the long, booming blasts of a steam whistle. A steamer out on that snow-shrouded lake was in distress. The sound ceased, and the gale bore in only the ordinary storm and fog signals. Corvet recognized the foghorn at the lighthouse at the end of the government pier; the light, he knew, was turning white, red, white, red, white behind the curtain of sleet; other steam vessels, not in distress, blew their blasts; the long four of the steamer calling for help cut in again.

Corvet stopped, drew up his shoulders, and stood staring out toward the lake, as the signal blasts of distress boomed and boomed again. Color came now into his pale cheeks for an instant. A siren swelled and shrieked, died away wailing, shrieked louder and stopped; the four blasts blew again, and the siren wailed in answer.

A door opened behind Corvet; warm air rushed out, laden with sweet, heavy odors — chocolate and candy; girls' laughter, exaggerated exclamations, laughter

again came with it; and two girls holding their muffs before their faces passed by.

"See you to-night, dear."

"Yes; I'll be there — if he comes."

"Oh, he'll come!"

They ran to different limousines, scurried in, and the cars swept off.

Corvet turned about to the tearoom from which they had come; he could see, as the door opened again, a dozen tables with their white cloths, shining silver, and steaming little porcelain pots; twenty or thirty girls and young women were refreshing themselves, pleasantly, after shopping or fittings or a concert; a few young men were sipping chocolate with them. The blast of the distress signal, the scream of the siren, must have come to them when the door was opened; but, if they heard it at all, they gave it no attention; the clatter and laughter and sipping of chocolate and tea was interrupted only by those who reached quickly for a shopping list or some filmy possession threatened by the draft. They were as oblivious to the lake in front of their windows, to the ship struggling for life in the storm, as though the snow were a screen which shut them into a distant world.

To Corvet, a lake man for forty years, there was nothing strange in this. Twenty miles, from north to south, the city — its business blocks, its hotels and restaurants, its homes — faced the water and, except where the piers formed the harbor, all unprotected water, an open sea where in times of storm ships sank and grounded, men fought for their lives against the elements and, losing, drowned and died; and Corvet was well aware that likely enough none of those in that

tearoom or in that whole building knew what four long blasts meant when they were blown as they were now, or what the siren meant that answered. But now, as he listened to the blasts which seemed to have grown more desperate, this profoundly affected Corvet. He moved once to stop one of the couples coming from the tearoom. They hesitated, as he stared at them; then, when they had passed him, they glanced back. Corvet shook himself together and went on.

He continued to go north. He had not seemed, in the beginning, to have made conscious choice of this direction; but now he was following it purposely. He stopped once at a shop which sold men's things to make a telephone call. He asked for Miss Sherrill when the number answered; but he did not wish to speak to her, he said; he wanted merely to be sure she would be there if he stopped in to see her in half an hour. Then — north again. He crossed the bridge. Now, fifteen minutes later, he came in sight of the lake once more.

Great houses, the Sherrill house among them, here face the Drive, the bridle path, the strip of park, and the wide stone esplanade which edges the lake. Corvet crossed to this esplanade. It was an ice-bank now; hummocks of snow and ice higher than a man's head shut off view of the floes tossing and crashing as far out as the blizzard let one see; but, dislodged and shaken by the buffeting of the floe, they let the gray water swell up from underneath and wash around his feet as he went on. He did not stop at the Sherrill house or look toward it, but went on fully a quarter of a mile beyond it; then he came back, and with an oddly strained and queer expression and attitude, he

stood staring out into the lake. He could not hear the distress signals now.

Suddenly he turned. Constance Sherrill, seeing him from a window of her home, had caught a cape about her and run out to him.

"Uncle Benny!" she hailed him with the affectionate name she had used with her father's partner since she was a baby. "Uncle Benny, aren't you coming in?"

"Yes," he said vaguely. "Yes, of course." He made no move but remained staring at her. "Connie!" he exclaimed suddenly, with strange reproach to himself in his tone. "Connie! Dear little Connie!"

"Why?" she asked him. "Uncle Benny, what's the matter?"

He seemed to catch himself together. "There was a ship out there in trouble," he said in a quite different tone. "They aren't blowing any more; are they all right?"

"It was one of the M and D boats — the *Louisiana*, they told me. She went by here blowing for help, and I called up the office to find out. A tug and one other of their line got out to her; she had started a cylinder head bucking the ice and was taking in a little water. Uncle Benny, you must put on your coat."

She brushed the sleet from his shoulders and collar, and held the coat for him; he put it on obediently.

"Has Spearman been here to-day?" he asked, not looking at her.

"To see father?"

"No; to see you."

"No."

He seized her wrist. "Don't see him, when he comes!" he commanded.

"Uncle Benny!"

"Don't see him!" Corvet repeated. "He's asked you to marry him, hasn't he?"

Connie could not refuse the answer. "Yes."

"And you?"

"Why — why, Uncle Benny, I haven't answered him yet."

"Then don't — don't; do you understand, Connie?"

She hesitated, frightened for him. "I'll — I'll tell you before I see him, if you want me to, Uncle Benny," she granted.

"But if you shouldn't be able to tell me then, Connie; if you shouldn't — want to then?" The humility of his look perplexed her; if he had been any other man — any man except Uncle Benny — she would have thought some shameful and terrifying threat hung over him; but he broke off sharply. "I must go home," he said uncertainly. "I must go home; then I'll come back. Connie, you won't give him an answer till I come back, will you?"

"No." He got her promise, half frightened, half bewildered; then he turned at once and went swiftly away from her.

She ran back to the door of her father's house. From there she saw him reach the corner and turn west to go to Astor Street. He was walking rapidly and did not hesitate.

The trite truism which relates the inability of human beings to know the future, has a counterpart not so often mentioned: We do not always know our own past until the future has made plain what has happened to us. Constance Sherrill, at the close of this, the most important day in her life, did not know at all

that it had been important to her. All she felt was a perplexed, but indefinite uneasiness about Uncle Benny. How strangely he had acted! Her uneasiness increased when the afternoon and evening passed without his coming back to see her as he had promised, but she reflected he had not set any definite time when she was to expect him. During the night her anxiety grew still greater; and in the morning she called his house up on the telephone, but the call was unanswered. An hour later, she called again; still getting no result, she called her father at his office, and told him of her anxiety about Uncle Benny, but without repeating what Uncle Benny had said to her or the promise she had made to him. Her father made light of her fears; Uncle Benny, he reminded her, often acted queerly in bad weather. Only partly reassured, she called Uncle Benny's house several more times during the morning, but still got no reply; and after luncheon she called her father again, to tell him that she had resolved to get some one to go over to the house with her.

Her father, to her surprise, forbade this rather sharply; his voice, she realized, was agitated and excited, and she asked him the reason; but instead of answering her, he made her repeat to him her conversation of the afternoon before with Uncle Benny, and now he questioned her closely about it. But when she, in her turn, tried to question him, he merely put her off and told her not to worry. Later, when she called him again, resolved to make him tell her what was the matter, he had left the office.

In the late afternoon, as dusk was drawing into dark, she stood at the window, watching the storm, which still continued, with one of those delusive hopes

which come during anxiety that, because it was the time of day at which she had seen Uncle Benny walking by the lake the day before, she might see him there again, when she saw her father's motor approaching. It was coming from the north, not from the south as it would have been if he was coming from his office or his club, and it had turned into the drive from the west. She knew, therefore, that he was coming from Uncle Benny's house, and, as the car swerved and wheeled in, she ran out into the hall to meet him.

He came in without taking off hat or coat: she could see that he was perturbed, greatly agitated.

"What is it, father?" she demanded. "What has happened?"

"I do not know, my dear."

"It is something — something that has happened to Uncle Benny?"

"I am afraid so, dear — yes. But I do not know what it is that has happened, or I would tell you."

He put his arm about her and drew her into a room opening off the hall — his study. He made her repeat again to him the conversation she had had with Uncle Benny and tell him how he had acted; but she saw that what she told him did not help him. He seemed to consider it carefully, but in the end to discard or disregard it.

Then he drew her toward him.

"Tell me, little daughter. You have been a great deal with Uncle Benny and have talked with him; I want you to think carefully. Did you ever hear him speak of any one called Alan Conrad?"

She thought. "No, father."

"No reference ever made by him at all to either name — Alan or Conrad?"

"No, father."

"No reference either to any one living in Kansas, or to a town there called Blue Rapids?"

"No, father. Who is Alan Conrad?"

"I do not know, dear. I never heard the name until to-day, and Henry Spearman had never heard it. But it appears to be intimately connected in some way with what was troubling Uncle Benny yesterday. He wrote a letter yesterday to Alan Conrad in Blue Rapids and mailed it himself; and afterward he tried to get it back, but it already had been taken up and was on its way. I have not been able to learn anything more about the letter than that. He seems to have been excited and troubled all day; he talked queerly to you, and he quarreled with Henry, but apparently not about anything of importance. And to-day that name, Alan Conrad, came to me in quite another way, in a way which makes it certain that it is closely connected with whatever has happened to Uncle Benny. You are quite sure you never heard him mention it, dear?"

"Quite sure, father."

He released her and, still in his hat and coat, went swiftly up the stairs. She ran after him and found him standing before a highboy in his dressing room. He unlocked a drawer in the highboy, and from within the drawer he took a key. Then, still disregarding her, he hurried back down-stairs.

As she followed him, she caught up a wrap and pulled it around her. He had told the motor, she realized now, to wait; but as he reached the door, he turned and stopped her.

"I would rather you did not come with me, little daughter. I do not know at all what it is that has happened — I will let you know as soon as I find out."

The finality in his tone stopped her from argument. As the house door and then the door of the limousine closed after him, she went back toward the window, slowly taking off the wrap. She saw the motor shoot swiftly out upon the drive, turn northward in the way that it had come, and then turn again, and disappear. She could only stand and watch for it to come back and listen for the 'phone; for the moment she found it difficult to think. Something had happened to Uncle Benny, something terrible, dreadful for those who loved him; that was plain, though only the fact and not its nature was known to her or to her father; and that something was connected — intimately connected, her father had said — with a name which no one who knew Uncle Benny, ever had heard before, with the name of Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids, Kansas. Who was this Alan Conrad, and what could his connection be with Uncle Benny so to precipitate disaster upon him?

CHAPTER II

WHO IS ALAN CONRAD?

THE recipient of the letter which Benjamin Corvet had written and later so excitedly attempted to recover, was asking himself a question which was almost the same as the question which Constance Sherrill had asked. He was, the second morning later, waiting for the first of the two daily eastbound trains which stopped at the little Kansas town of Blue Rapids which he called home. As long as he could look back into his life, the question, who is this person they call Alan Conrad, and what am I to the man who writes from Chicago, had been the paramount enigma of existence for him. Since he was now twenty-three, as nearly as he had been able to approximate it, and as distinct recollection of isolated, extraordinary events went back to the time when he was five, it was quite eighteen years since he had first noticed the question put to the people who had him in charge: "So this is little Alan Conrad. Who is he?"

Undoubtedly the question had been asked in his presence before; certainly it was asked many times afterwards; but it was since that day when, on his noticing the absence of a birthday of his own, they had told him he was five, that he connected the evasion of the answer with the difference between himself and the other children he saw, and particularly between him-

self and the boy and girl in the same house with him. When visitors came from somewhere far off, no one of them ever looked surprised at seeing the other children or asked about them. Always, when some one came, it was, "So this is little Jim!" and "This is Betty; she's more of a Welton every day!" Then, each time with that change in the voice and in the look of the eyes and in the feel of the arms about him — for though Alan could not feel how the arms hugged Jim and Betty, he knew that for him it was quite different —"So this is Alan Conrad," or, "So this is the child!" or, "This, I suppose, is the boy I've heard about!"

However, there was a quite definite, if puzzling, advantage at times in being Alan Conrad. Following the arrival of certain letters, which were distinguished from most others arriving at the house by having no ink writing on the envelope but just a sort of purple or black printing like newspapers, Alan invariably received a dollar to spend just as he liked. To be sure, unless "papa" took him to town, there was nothing for him to spend it upon; so, likely enough, it went into the square iron bank, of which the key was lost; but quite often he did spend it according to plans agreed upon among all his friends and, in memory of these occasions and in anticipation of the next, "Alan's dollar" became a community institution among the children.

But exhilarating and wonderful as it was to be able of one's self to take three friends to the circus, or to be the purveyor of twenty whole packages — not sticks — of gum, yet the dollar really made only more plain the boy's difference. The regularity and certainty of its

arrival as Alan's share of some larger sum of money which came to "papa" in the letter, never served to make the event ordinary or accepted.

"Who gives it to you, Alan?" was a question more often asked, as time went on. The only answer Alan could give was, "It comes from Chicago." The postmark on the envelope, Alan noticed, was always Chicago; that was all he ever could find out about his dollar. He was about ten years old when, for a reason as inexplicable as the dollar's coming, the letters with the typewritten addresses and the enclosed money ceased.

Except for the loss of the dollar at the end of every second month — a loss much discussed by all the children and not accepted as permanent till more than two years had passed — Alan felt no immediate results from the cessation of the letters from Chicago; and when the first effects appeared, Jim and Betty felt them quite as much as he. Papa and mamma felt them, too, when the farm had to be given up, and the family moved to the town, and papa went to work in the woolen mill beside the river.

Papa and mamma, at first surprised and dismayed by the stopping of the letters, still clung to the hope of the familiar, typewritten addressed envelope appearing again; but when, after two years, no more money came, resentment which had been steadily growing against the person who had sent the money began to turn against Alan; and his "parents" told him all they knew about him.

In 1896 they had noticed an advertisement for persons to care for a child; they had answered it to the office of the newspaper which printed it. In response

to their letter a man called upon them and, after seeing them and going around to see their friends, had made arrangements with them to take a boy of three, who was in good health and came of good people. He paid in advance board for a year and agreed to send a certain amount every two months after that time. The man brought the boy, whom he called Alan Conrad, and left him. For seven years the money agreed upon came; now it had ceased, and papa had no way of finding the man — the name given by him appeared to be fictitious, and he had left no address except "general delivery, Chicago"— Papa knew nothing more than that. He had advertised in the Chicago papers after the money stopped coming, and he had communicated with every one named Conrad in or near Chicago, but he had learned nothing. Thus, at the age of thirteen, Alan definitely knew that what he already had guessed — the fact that he belonged somewhere else than in the little brown house — was all that any one there could tell him; and the knowledge gave persistence to many internal questionings. Where did he belong? Who was he? Who was the man who had brought him here? Had the money ceased coming because the person who sent it was dead? In that case, connection of Alan with the place where he belonged was permanently broken. Or would some other communication from that source reach him some time — if not money, then something else? Would he be sent for some day? He did not resent "papa and mamma's" new attitude of benefactors toward him; instead, loving them both because he had no one else to love, he sympathized with it. They had struggled hard to keep the farm. They had ambitions for Jim; they were scrimping and sparing now so that

Jim could go to college, and whatever was given to Alan was taken away from Jim and diminished by just that much his opportunity.

But when Alan asked papa to get him a job in the woolen mill at the other side of town where papa himself worked in some humble and indefinite capacity, the request was refused. Thus, externally at least, Alan's learning the little that was known about himself made no change in his way of living; he went, as did Jim, to the town school, which combined grammar and high schools under one roof; and, as he grew older, he clerked — as Jim also did — in one of the town stores during vacations and in the evenings; the only difference was this: that Jim's money, so earned, was his own, but Alan carried his home as part payment of those arrears which had mounted up against him since the letters ceased coming. At seventeen, having finished high school, he was clerking officially in Merrill's general store, when the next letter came.

It was addressed this time not to papa, but to Alan Conrad. He seized it, tore it open, and a bank draft for fifteen hundred dollars fell out. There was no letter with the enclosure, no word of communication; just the draft to the order of Alan Conrad. Alan wrote the Chicago bank by which the draft had been issued; their reply showed that the draft had been purchased with currency, so there was no record of the identity of the person who had sent it. More than that amount was due for arrears for the seven years during which no money was sent, even when the total which Alan had earned was deducted. So Alan merely endorsed the draft over to "father"; and that fall Jim went to college. But, when Jim discovered that it not only was

possible but planned at the university for a boy to work his way through, Alan went also.

Four wonderful years followed. The family of a professor of physics, with whom he was brought in contact by his work outside of college, liked him and "took him up." He lodged finally in their house and became one of them. In companionship with these educated people, ideas and manners came to him which he could not have acquired at home; athletics straightened and added bearing to his muscular, well-formed body; his pleasant, strong young face acquired self-reliance and self-control. Life became filled with possibilities for himself which it had never held before.

But on his day of graduation he had to put away the enterprises he had planned and the dreams he dreamed and, conscious that his debt to father and mother still remained unpaid, he had returned to care for them; for father's health had failed and Jim who had opened a law office in Kansas City, could do nothing to help.

No more money had followed the draft from Chicago and there had been no communication of any kind; but the receipt of so considerable a sum had revived and intensified all Alan's speculations about himself. The vague expectation of his childhood that sometime, in some way, he would be "sent for" had grown during the last six years to a definite belief. And now — on the afternoon before — the summons had come.

This time, as he tore open the envelope, he saw that besides a check, there was writing within — an uneven and nervous-looking but plainly legible communication in longhand. The letter made no explanation. It told him, rather than asked him, to come to Chicago, gave

minute instructions for the journey, and advised him to telegraph when he started. The check was for a hundred dollars to pay his expenses. Check and letter were signed by a name completely strange to him.

He was a distinctly attractive looking lad, as he stood now on the station platform of the little town, while the eastbound train rumbled in, and he fingered in his pocket the letter from Chicago.

As the train came to a stop, he pushed his suitcase up on to a car platform and stood on the bottom step, looking back at the little town standing away from its railroad station among brown, treeless hills, now scantily snow-covered — the town which was the only home he ever consciously had known. His eyes dampened and he choked, as he looked at it and at the people on the station platform — the station-master, the drayman, the man from the post office who would receive the mail bag, people who called him by his first name, as he called them by theirs. He did not doubt at all that he would see the town and them again. The question was what he would be when he did see them. They and it would not be changed, but he would. As the train started, he picked up the suitcase and carried it into the second day-coach.

Finding a seat, at once he took the letter from his pocket and for the dozenth time reread it. Was Corvet a relative? Was he the man who had sent the remittances when Alan was a little boy, and the one who later had sent the fifteen hundred dollars? Or was he merely a go-between, perhaps a lawyer? There was no letterhead to give aid in these speculations. The address to which Alan was to come was in Astor Street. He had never heard the name of the street before. Was it a

business street, Corvet's address in some great office building, perhaps?

He tried by repeating both names over and over to himself to arouse any obscure, obliterated childhood memory he might have had of then; but the repetition brought no result. Memory, when he stretched it back to its furthest, showed him only the Kansas prairie.

Late that afternoon he reached Kansas City, designated in the letter as the point where he would change cars. That night saw him in his train — a transcontinental with berths nearly all made up and people sleeping behind the curtains. Alan undressed and got into his berth, but he lay awake most of the night, excited and expectant. The late February dawn showed him the rolling lands of Iowa which changed, while he was at breakfast in the dining car, to the snow-covered fields and farms of northern Illinois. Toward noon, he could see, as the train rounded curves, that the horizon to the east had taken on a murky look. Vast, vague, the shadow — the emanation of hundreds of thousands of chimneys — thickened and grew more definite as the train sped on; suburban villages began supplanting country towns; stations became more pretentious. They passed factories; then hundreds of acres of little houses of the factory workers in long rows; swiftly the buildings became larger, closer together; he had a vision of miles upon miles of streets, and the train rolled slowly into a long trainshed and stopped.

Alan, following the porter with his suitcase from the car, stepped down among the crowds hurrying to and from the trains. He was not confused, he was only intensely excited. Acting in implicit accord with the instructions of the letter, which he knew by heart, he

went to the uniformed attendant and engaged a taxicab — itself no small experience; there would be no one at the station to meet him, the letter had said. He gave the Astor Street address and got into the cab. Leaning forward in his seat, looking to the right and then to the left as he was driven through the city, his first sensation was only disappointment.

Except that it was larger, with more and bigger buildings and with more people upon its streets, Chicago apparently did not differ from Kansas City. If it was, in reality, the city of his birth, or if ever he had seen these streets before, they now aroused no memories in him.

It had begun to snow again. For a few blocks the taxicab drove north past more or less ordinary buildings, then turned east on a broad boulevard where tall tile and brick and stone structures towered till their roofs were hidden in the snowfall. The large, light flakes, falling lazily, were thick enough so that, when the taxicab swung to the north again, there seemed to Alan only a great vague void to his right. For the hundred yards which he could view clearly, the space appeared to be a park; now a huge granite building, guarded by stone lions, went by; then more park; but beyond — A strange stir and tingle, quite distinct from the excitement of the arrival at the station, pricked in Alan's veins, and hastily he dropped the window to his right and gazed out again. The lake, as he had known since his geography days, lay to the east of Chicago; therefore that void out there beyond the park was the lake or, at least, the harbor. A different air seemed to come from it; sounds . . . Suddenly it all was shut off; the taxicab, swerving a little, was dash-

ing between business blocks; a row of buildings had risen again upon the right; they broke abruptly to show him a wooden-walled chasm in which flowed a river full of ice with a tug dropping its smokestack as it went below the bridge which the cab crossed; buildings on both sides again; then, to the right, a roaring, heaving, crashing expanse.

The sound, Alan knew, had been coming to him as an undertone for many minutes; now it overwhelmed, swallowed all other sound. It was great, not loud; all sound which Alan had heard before, except the soughing of the wind over his prairies, came from one point; even the monstrous city murmur was centered in comparison with this. Alan could see only a few hundred yards out over the water as the taxicab ran along the lake drive, but what was before him was the surf of a sea; that constant, never diminishing, never increasing roar came from far beyond the shore; the surge and rise and fall and surge again were of a sea in motion. Floes floated, tossed up, tumbled, broke, and rose again with the rush of the surf; spray flew up between the floes; geysers spurted high into the air as the pressure of the water, bearing up against the ice, burst between two great ice-cakes before the waves cracked them and tumbled them over. And all was without wind; over the lake, as over the land, the soft snowflakes lazily floated down, scarcely stirred by the slightest breeze; that roar was the voice of the water, that awful power its own.

Alan choked and gasped for breath, his pulses pounding in his throat; he had snatched off his hat and, leaning out of the window sucked the lake air into his lungs. There had been nothing to make him expect this overwhelming crush of feeling. The lake — he had thought

of it, of course, as a great body of water, an interesting sight for a prairie boy to see; that was all. No physical experience in all his memory had affected him like this; and it was without warning; the strange thing that had stirred within him as the car brought him to the drive down-town was strengthened now a thousandfold; it amazed, half frightened, half dizzied him. Now, as the motor suddenly swung around a corner and shut the sight of the lake from him, Alan sat back breathless.

"Astor Street," he read the marker on the corner a block back from the lake, and he bent quickly forward to look, as the car swung to the right into Astor Street. It was — as in this neighborhood it must be — a residence street of handsome mansions built close together. The car swerved to the east curb about the middle of the block and came to a stop. The house before which it had halted was a large stone house of quiet, good design; it was some generation older, apparently, than the houses on each side of it which were brick and terra cotta of recent, fashionable architecture; Alan only glanced at them long enough to get that impression before he opened the cab door and got out; but as the cab drove away, he stood beside his suitcase looking up at the old house which bore the number given in Benjamin Corvet's letter, then around at the other houses and back to that again.

The neighborhood obviously precluded the probability of Corvet's being merely a lawyer — a go-between. He must be some relative; the question ever present in Alan's thought since the receipt of the letter, but held in abeyance, as to the possibility and nearness of Corvet's relation to him, took sharper and more exact form

now than he had dared to let it take before. Was his relationship to Corvet, perhaps, the closest of all relationships? Was Corvet his . . . father? He checked the question within himself, for the time had passed for mere speculation upon it now. Alan was trembling excitedly; for — whoever Corvet might be — the enigma of Alan's existence was going to be answered when he had entered that house. He was going to know who he was. All the possibilities, the responsibilities, the attachments, the opportunities, perhaps, of that person whom he was — but whom, as yet, he did not know — were before him.

He half expected the heavy, glassless door at the top of the stone steps to be opened by some one coming out to greet him, as he took up his suitcase; but the gray house, like the brighter mansions on both sides of it, remained impassive. If any one in that house had observed his coming, no sign was given. He went up the steps and, with fingers excitedly unsteady, he pushed the bell beside the door.

The door opened almost instantly — so quickly after the ring, indeed, that Alan, with leaping throb of his heart, knew that some one must have been awaiting him. But the door opened only halfway, and the man who stood within, gazing out at Alan questioningly, was obviously a servant.

"What is it?" he asked, as Alan stood looking at him and past him to the narrow section of darkened hall which was in sight.

Alan put his hand over the letter in his pocket. "I've come to see Mr. Corvet," he said —"Mr. Benjamin Corvet."

"What is your name?"

Alan gave his name; the man repeated it after him, in the manner of a trained servant, quite without inflection. Alan, not familiar with such tones, waited uncertainly. So far as he could tell, the name was entirely strange to the servant, awaking neither welcome nor opposition, but indifference. The man stepped back, but not in such a manner as to invite Alan in; on the contrary, he half closed the door as he stepped back, leaving it open only an inch or two; but it was enough so that Alan heard him say to some one within:

"He says he's him."

"Ask him in; I will speak to him." It was a girl's voice — this second one, a voice such as Alan never had heard before. It was low and soft but quite clear and distinct, with youthful, impulsive modulations and the manner of accent which Alan knew must go with the sort of people who lived in houses like those on this street.

The servant, obeying the voice, returned and opened wide the door.

"Will you come in, sir?"

Alan put down his suitcase on the stone porch; the man made no move to pick it up and bring it in. Then Alan stepped into the hall face to face with the girl who had come from the big room on the right.

She was quite a young girl — not over twenty-one or twenty-two, Alan judged; like girls brought up in wealthy families, she seemed to Alan to have gained young womanhood in far greater degree in some respects than the girls he knew, while, at the same time, in other ways, she retained more than they some characteristics of a child. Her slender figure had a woman's assurance and grace; her soft brown hair was dressed like a

woman's; her gray eyes had the open directness of the girl. Her face — smoothly oval, with straight brows and a skin so delicate that at the temples the veins showed dimly blue — was at once womanly and youthful; and there was something altogether likable and simple about her, as she studied Alan now. She had on a street dress and hat; whether it was this, or whether it was the contrast of her youth and vitality with this somber, darkened house that told him, Alan could not tell, but he felt instinctively that this house was not her home. More likely, it was some indefinable, yet convincing expression of her manner that gave him that impression. While he hazarded, with fast beating heart, what privilege of acquaintance with her Alan Conrad might have, she moved a little nearer to him. She was slightly pale, he noticed now, and there were lines of strain and trouble about her eyes.

"I am Constance Sherrill," she announced. Her tone implied quite evidently that she expected him to have some knowledge of her, and she seemed surprised to see that her name did not mean more to him.

"Mr. Corvet is not here this morning," she said.

He hesitated, but persisted: "I was to see him here to-day, Miss Sherrill. He wrote me, and I telegraphed him I would be here to-day."

"I know," she answered. "We had your telegram. Mr. Corvet was not here when it came, so my father opened it." Her voice broke oddly, and he studied her in indecision, wondering who that father might be that opened Mr. Corvet's telegrams.

"Mr. Corvet went away very suddenly," she explained. She seemed, he thought, to be trying to make something plain to him which might be a shock to him;

yet herself to be uncertain what the nature of that shock might be. Her look was scrutinizing, questioning, anxious, but not unfriendly. "After he had written you and something else had happened — I think — to alarm my father about him, father came here to his house to look after him. He thought something might have . . . happened to Mr. Corvet here in his house. But Mr. Corvet was not here."

"You mean he has — disappeared?"

"Yes; he has disappeared."

Alan gazed at her dizzily. Benjamin Corvet — whoever he might be — had disappeared; he had gone. Did any one else, then, know about Alan Conrad?

"No one has seen Mr. Corvet," she said, "since the day he wrote to you. We know that — that he became so disturbed after doing that — writing to you — that we thought you must bring with you information of him."

"Information!"

"So we have been waiting for you to come here and tell us what you know about him or — or your connection with him."

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION OF A SHADOW

ALAN, as he looked confusedly and blankly at her, made no attempt to answer the question she had asked, or to explain. For the moment, as he fought to realize what she had said and its meaning for himself, all his thought was lost in mere dismay, in the denial and checking of what he had been feeling as he entered the house. His silence and confusion, he knew, must seem to Constance Sherrill unwillingness to answer her; for she did not suspect that he was unable to answer her. She plainly took it in that way; but she did not seem offended; it was sympathy, rather, that she showed. She seemed to appreciate, without understanding except through her feelings, that — for some reason — answer was difficult and dismaying for him.

"You would rather explain to father than to me," she decided.

He hesitated. What he wanted now was time to think, to learn who she was and who her father was, and to adjust himself to this strange reversal of his expectations.

"Yes; I would rather do that," he said.

"Will you come around to our house, then, please?"

She caught up her fur collar and muff from a chair and spoke a word to the servant. As she went out on

to the porch, he followed her and stooped to pick up his suitcase.

"Simons will bring that," she said, "unless you'd rather have it with you. It is only a short walk."

He was recovering from the first shock of her question now, and, reflecting that men who accompanied Constance Sherrill probably did not carry hand baggage, he put the suitcase down and followed her to the walk. As she turned north and he caught step beside her, he studied her with quick interested glances, realizing her difference from all other girls he ever had walked with, but he did not speak to her nor she to him. Turning east at the first corner, they came within sight and hearing again of the turmoil of the lake.

"We go south here," she said at the corner of the Drive. "Our house is almost back to back with Mr. Corvet's."

Alan, looking up after he had made the turn with her, recognized the block as one he had seen pictured sometimes in magazines and illustrated papers as a "row" of the city's most beautiful homes. Larger, handsomer, and finer than the mansions on Astor Street, each had its lawn or terrace in front and on both sides, where snow-mantled shrubs and straw-bound rosebushes suggested the gardens of spring. They turned in at the entrance of a house in the middle of the block and went up the low, wide stone steps; the door opened to them without ring or knock; a servant in the hall within took Alan's hat and coat, and he followed Constance past some great room upon his right to a smaller one farther down the hall.

"Will you wait here, please?" she asked.

He sat down, and she left him; when her footsteps had

died away, and he could hear no other sounds except the occasional soft tread of some servant, he twisted himself about in his chair and looked around. A door between the room he was in and the large room which had been upon his right as they came in — a drawing-room — stood open; he could see into the drawing-room, and he could see through the other door a portion of the hall; his inspection of these increased the bewilderment he felt. Who were these Sherrills? Who was Corvet, and what was his relation to the Sherrills? What, beyond all, was their and Corvet's relation to Alan Conrad — to himself? The shock and confusion he had felt at the nature of his reception in Corvet's house, and the strangeness of his transition from his little Kansas town to a place and people such as this, had prevented him from inquiring directly from Constance Sherrill as to that; and, on her part, she had assumed, plainly, that he already knew and need not be told.

He got up and moved about the rooms; they, like all rooms, must tell something about the people who lived in them. The rooms were large and open; Alan, in dreaming and fancying to himself the places to which he might some day be summoned, had never dreamed of entering such a home as this. For it was a home; in its light and in its furnishings there was nothing of the stiffness and aloofness which Alan, never having seen such rooms except in pictures, had imagined to be necessary evils accompanying riches and luxury; it was not the richness of its furnishings that impressed him first, it was its livableness. Among the more modern pieces in the drawing-room and hall were some which were antique. In the part of the hall that he could see, a black and ancient-looking chair whose lines he recog-

nized, stood against the wall. He had seen chairs like that, heirlooms of colonial Massachusetts or Connecticut, cherished in Kansas farmhouses and recalling some long-past exodus of the family from New England. On the wall of the drawing-room, among the beautiful and elusive paintings and etchings, was a picture of a ship, plainly framed; he moved closer to look at it, but he did not know what kind of ship it was except that it was a sailing ship of some long-disused design. Then he drew back again into the smaller room where he had been left, and sat down again to wait.

A comfortable fire of cannel coal was burning in this smaller room in a black fire-basket set in a white marble grate, obviously much older than the house; there were big easy leather chairs before it, and beside it there were bookcases. On one of these stood a two-handled silver trophy cup, and hung high upon the wall above the mantel was a long racing sweep with the date '85 painted in black across the blade. He had the feeling, coming quite unconsciously, of liking the people who lived in this handsome house.

He straightened and looked about, then got up, as Constance Sherrill came back into the room.

"Father is not here just now," she said. "We weren't sure from your telegram exactly at what hour you would arrive, and that was why I waited at Mr. Corvet's to be sure we wouldn't miss you. I have telephoned father, and he's coming home at once."

She hesitated an instant in the doorway, then turned to go out again.

"Miss Sherrill —" he said.

She halted. "Yes."

"You told me you had been waiting for me to come

and explain my connection with Mr. Corvet. Well — I can't do that; that is what I came here hoping to find out."

She came back toward him slowly.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

He was forcing himself to disregard the strangeness which his surroundings and all that had happened in the last half hour had made him feel; leaning his arms on the back of the chair in which he had been sitting, he managed to smile reassuringly; and he fought down and controlled resolutely the excitement in his voice, as he told her rapidly the little he knew about himself.

He could not tell definitely how she was affected by what he said. She flushed slightly, following her first start of surprise after he had begun to speak; when he had finished, he saw that she was a little pale.

"Then you don't know anything about Mr. Corvet at all," she said.

"No; until I got his letter sending for me here, I'd never seen or heard his name."

She was thoughtful for a moment.

"Thank you for telling me," she said. "I'll tell my father when he comes."

"Your father is —?" he ventured.

She understood now that the name of Sherrill had meant nothing to him. "Father is Mr. Corvet's closest friend, and his business partner as well," she explained.

He thought she was going to tell him something more about them; but she seemed then to decide to leave that for her father to do. She crossed to the big chair beside the grate and seated herself. As she sat looking at him, hands clasped beneath her chin, and her elbows resting on the arm of the chair, there was speculation and

interest in her gaze; but she did not ask him anything more about himself. She inquired about the Kansas weather that week in comparison with the storm which had just ceased in Chicago, and about Blue Rapids, which she said she had looked up upon the map, and he took this chat for what it was — notification that she did not wish to continue the other topic just then.

She, he saw, was listening, like himself, for the sound of Sherrill's arrival at the house; and when it came, she recognized it first, rose, and excused herself. He heard her voice in the hall, then her father's deeper voice which answered; and ten minutes later, he looked up to see the man these things had told him must be Sherrill standing in the door and looking at him.

He was a tall man, sparely built; his broad shoulders had been those of an athlete in his youth; now, at something over fifty, they had taken on a slight, rather studious stoop, and his brown hair had thinned upon his forehead. His eyes, gray like his daughter's, were thoughtful eyes; just now deep trouble filled them. His look and bearing of a refined and educated gentleman took away all chance of offense from the long, inquiring scrutiny to which he subjected Alan's features and figure before he came into the room.

Alan had risen at sight of him; Sherrill, as he came in, motioned him back to his seat; he did not sit down himself, but crossed to the mantel and leaned against it.

"I am Lawrence Sherrill," he said.

As the tall, graceful, thoughtful man stood looking down at him, Alan could tell nothing of the attitude of this friend of Benjamin Corvet toward himself. His manner had the same reserve toward Alan, the same

questioning consideration of him, that Constance Sherrill had had after Alan had told her about himself.

"My daughter has repeated to me what you told her, Mr. Conrad," Sherrill observed. "Is there anything you want to add to me regarding that?"

"There's nothing I can add," Alan answered. "I told her all that I know about myself."

"And about Mr. Corvet?"

"I know nothing at all about Mr. Corvet."

"I am going to tell you some things about Mr. Corvet," Sherrill said. "I had reason — I do not want to explain just yet what that reason was — for thinking you could tell us certain things about Mr. Corvet, which would, perhaps, make plainer what has happened to him. When I tell you about him now, it is in the hope that, in that way, I may awake some forgotten memory of him in you; if not that, you may discover some coincidences of dates or events in Corvet's life with dates or events in your own. Will you tell me frankly, if you do discover anything like that?"

"Yes; certainly."

Alan leaned forward in the big chair, hands clasped between his knees, his blood tingling sharply in his face and fingertips. So Sherrill expected to make him remember Corvet! There was strange excitement in this, and he waited eagerly for Sherrill to begin. For several moments, Sherrill paced up and down before the fire; then he returned to his place before the mantel.

"I first met Benjamin Corvet," he commenced, "nearly thirty years ago. I had come West for the first time the year before; I was about your own age and had been graduated from college only a short time, and a business opening had offered itself here.

"There was a sentimental reason — I think I must call it that — as well, for my coming to Chicago. Until my generation, the property of our family had always been largely — and generally exclusively — in ships. It is a Salem family; a Sherrill was a sea-captain, living in Salem, they say, when his neighbors — and he, I suppose — hanged witches; we had privateers in 1812 and our clippers went round the Horn in '49. The *Alabama* ended our ships in '63, as it ended practically the rest of the American shipping on the Atlantic; and in '73, when our part of the *Alabama* claims was paid us, my mother put it in bonds waiting for me to grow up.

"Sentiment, when I came of age, made me want to put this money back into ships flying the American flag; but there was small chance of putting it — and keeping it, with profit — in American ships on the sea. In Boston and New York, I had seen the foreign flags on the deep-water ships — British, German, French, Norwegian, Swedish, and Greek; our flag flew mostly on ferries and excursion steamers. But times were booming on the great lakes. Chicago, which had more than recovered from the fire, was doubling its population every decade; Cleveland, Duluth, and Milwaukee were leaping up as ports. Men were growing millions of bushels of grain which they couldn't ship except by lake; hundreds of thousands of tons of ore had to go by water; and there were tens of millions of feet of pine and hardwood from the Michigan forests. Sailing vessels such as the Sherrills had always operated, it is true, had seen their day and were disappearing from the lakes; were being 'sold,' many of them, as the saying is, 'to the insurance companies' by deliberate

wrecking. Steamers were taking their place. Towing had come in. The first of the whalebacks was built about that time, and we began to see those processions of a barge and two, three, or four tows which the lakemen called 'the sow and her pigs.' Men of all sorts had come forward, of course, and, serving the situation more or less accidentally, were making themselves rich.

"It was railroading which had brought me West; but I had brought with me the *Alabama* money to put into ships. I have called it sentiment, but it was not merely that; I felt, young man though I was, that this transportation matter was all one thing, and that in the end the railroads would own the ships. I have never engaged very actively in the operation of the ships; my daughter would like me to be more active in it than I have been; but ever since, I have had money in lake vessels. It was the year that I began that sort of investment that I first met Corvet."

Alan looked up quickly. "Mr. Corvet was —?" he asked.

"Corvet was — is a lakeman," Sherrill said.

Alan sat motionless, as he recollected the strange exaltation that had come to him when he saw the lake for the first time. Should he tell Sherrill of that? He decided it was too vague, too indefinite to be mentioned; no doubt any other man used only to the prairie might have felt the same.

"He was a ship owner, then," he said.

"Yes; he was a shipowner — not, however, on a large scale at that time. He had been a master, sailing ships which belonged to others; then he had sailed one of his own. He was operating then, I believe, two vessels;

but with the boom times on the lakes, his interests were beginning to expand. I met him frequently in the next few years, and we became close friends."

Sherrill broke off and stared an instant down at the rug. Alan bent forward; he made no interruption but only watched Sherrill attentively.

"It was one of the great advantages of the West, I think — and particularly of Chicago at that time — that it gave opportunity for friendships of that sort," Sherrill said. "Corvet was a man of a sort I would have been far less likely ever to have known intimately in the East. He was both what the lakes had made him and what he had made of himself; a great reader — wholly self-educated; he had, I think, many of the attributes of a great man — at least, they were those of a man who should have become great; he had imagination and vision. His whole thought and effort, at that time, were absorbed in furthering and developing the traffic on the lakes, and not at all from mere desire for personal success. I met him for the first time one day when I went to his office on some business. He had just opened an office at that time in one of the old ramshackle rows along the river front; there was nothing at all pretentious about it — the contrary, in fact; but as I went in and waited with the others who were there to see him, I had the sense of being in the ante-room of a great man. I do not mean there was any idiotic pomp or lackyism or red tape about it; I mean that the others who were waiting to see him, and who knew him, were keyed up by the anticipation and keyed me up. . . .

"I saw as much as I could of him after that, and our friendship became very close.

"In 1892, when I married and took my residence here on the lake shore — the house stood where this one stands now — Corvet bought the house on Astor Street. His only reason for doing it was, I believe, his desire to be near me. The neighborhood was what they call fashionable; neither Corvet nor Mrs. Corvet — he had married in 1889 — had social ambitions of that sort. Mrs. Corvet came from Detroit; she was of good family there — a strain of French blood in the family; she was a schoolteacher when he married her, and she had made a wonderful wife for him — a good woman, a woman of very high ideals; it was great grief to both of them that they had no children.

"Between 1886, when I first met him, and 1895, Corvet laid the foundation of great success; his boats seemed lucky, men liked to work for him, and he got the best skippers and crews. A Corvet captain boasted of it and, if he had had bad luck on another line, believed his luck changed when he took a Corvet ship; cargoes in Corvet bottoms somehow always reached port; there was a saying that in storm a Corvet ship never asked help; it gave it; certainly in twenty years no Corvet ship had suffered serious disaster. Corvet was not yet rich, but unless accident or undue competition intervened, he was certain to become so. Then something happened."

Sherrill looked away at evident loss how to describe it.

"To the ships?" Alan asked him.

"No; to him. In 1896, for no apparent reason, a great change came over him."

"In 1896!"

"That was the year."

Alan bent forward, his heart throbbing in his throat. "That was also the year when I was brought and left with the Weltons in Kansas," he said.

Sherrill did not speak for a moment. "I thought," he said finally, "it must have been about that time; but you did not tell my daughter the exact date."

"What kind of change came over him that year?" Alan asked.

Sherrill gazed down at the rug, then at Alan, then past him. "A change in his way of living," he replied. "The Corvet line of boats went on, expanded; interests were acquired in other lines; and Corvet and those allied with him swiftly grew rich. But in all this great development, for which Corvet's genius and ability had laid the foundation, Corvet himself ceased to take active part. I do not mean that he formally retired; he retained his control of the business, but he very seldom went to the office and, except for occasional violent, almost pettish interference in the affairs of the company, he left it in the hands of others. He took into partnership, about a year later, Henry Spearman, a young man who had been merely a mate on one of his ships. This proved subsequently to have been a good business move, for Spearman has tremendous energy, daring, and enterprise; and no doubt Corvet had recognized these qualities in him before others did. But at the time it excited considerable comment. It marked, certainly, the beginning of Corvet's withdrawal from active management. Since then he has been ostensibly and publicly the head of the concern, but he has left the management almost entirely to Spearman. The personal change in Corvet at that time is harder for me to describe to you."

Sherrill halted, his eyes dark with thought, his lips pressed closely together; Alan waited.

"When I saw Corvet again, in the summer of '96 — I had been South during the latter part of the winter and East through the spring — I was impressed by the vague but, to me, alarming change in him. I was reminded, I recall, of a friend I had had in college who had thought he was in perfect health and had gone to an examiner for life insurance and had been refused, and was trying to deny to himself and others that anything could be the matter. But with Corvet I knew the trouble was not physical. The next year his wife left him."

"The year of —?" Alan asked.

"That was 1897. We did not know at first, of course, that the separation was permanent. It proved so, however; and Corvet, I know now, had understood it to be that way from the first. Mrs. Corvet went to France — the French blood in her, I suppose, made her select that country; she had for a number of years a cottage near Trouville, in Normandy, and was active in church work. I know there was almost no communication between herself and her husband during those years, and her leaving him markedly affected Corvet. He had been very fond of her and proud of her. I had seen him sometimes watching her while she talked; he would gaze at her steadily and then look about at the other women in the room and back to her, and his head would nod just perceptibly with satisfaction; and she would see it sometimes and smile. There was no question of their understanding and affection up to the very time she so suddenly and so strangely left him. She died in Trouville in the spring of 1910, and Corvet's

first information of her death come to him through a paragraph in a newspaper."

Alan had started; Sherrill looked at him questioningly.

"The spring of 1910," Alan explained, "was when I received the bank draft for fifteen hundred dollars."

Sherrill nodded; he did not seem surprised to hear this; rather it appeared to be confirmation of something in his own thought.

"Following his wife's leaving him," Sherrill went on, "Corvet saw very little of any one. He spent most of his time in his own house; occasionally he lunched at his club; at rare intervals, and always unexpectedly, he appeared at his office. I remember that summer he was terribly disturbed because one of his ships was lost. It was not a bad disaster, for every one on the ship was saved, and hull and cargo were fully covered by insurance; but the Corvet record was broken; a Corvet ship had appealed for help; a Corvet vessel had not reached port. . . . And later in the fall, when two deckhands were washed from another of his vessels and drowned, he was again greatly wrought up, though his ships still had a most favorable record. In 1902 I proposed to him that I buy full ownership in the vessels I partly controlled and ally them with those he and Spearman operated. It was a time of combination — the railroads and the steel interests were acquiring the lake vessels; and though I believed in this, I was not willing to enter any combination which would take the name of Sherrill off the list of American shipowners. I did not give Corvet this as my reason; and he made me at that time a very strange counter-proposition — which I have never been able to understand, and which entailed the

very obliteration of my name which I was trying to avoid. He proposed that I accept a partnership in his concern on a most generous basis, but that the name of the company remain as it was, merely Corvet and Spearman. Spearman's influence and mine prevailed upon him to allow my name to appear; since then, the firm name has been Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman.

"Our friendship had strengthened and ripened during those years. The intense activity of Corvet's mind, which as a younger man he had directed wholly to the shipping, was directed, after he had isolated himself in this way, to other things. He took up almost feverishly an immense number of studies — strange studies most of them for a man whose youth had been almost violently active and who had once been a lake captain. I cannot tell you what they all were — geology, ethnology, nearly a score of subjects; he corresponded with various scientific societies; he has given almost the whole of his attention to such things for about twenty years. Since I have known him, he has transformed himself from the rather rough, uncouth — though always spiritually minded — man he was when I first met him into an educated gentleman whom anybody would be glad to know; but he has made very few acquaintances in that time, and has kept almost none of his old friendships. He has lived alone in the house on Astor Street with only one servant — the same one all these years.

"The only house he has visited with any frequency has been mine. He has always liked my wife; he had — he has a great affection for my daughter, who, when she was a child, ran in and out of his home as she pleased. He would take long walks with her; he'd come here sometimes in the afternoon to have tea with her on

stormy days; he liked to have her play and sing to him. My daughter believes now that his present disappearance — whatever has happened to him — is connected in some way with herself. I do not think that is so —"

Sherrill broke off and stood in thought for a moment; he seemed to consider, and to decide that it was not necessary to say anything more on that subject.

"Recently Corvet's moroseness and irritability had very greatly increased; he had quarreled frequently and bitterly with Spearman over business affairs. He had seemed more than usually eager at times to see me or to see my daughter; and at other times he had seemed to avoid us and keep away. I have had the feeling of late, though I could not give any actual reason for it except Corvet's manner and look, that the disturbance which had oppressed him for twenty years was culminating in some way. That culmination seems to have been reached three days ago, when he wrote summoning you here. Henry Spearman, whom I asked about you when I learned you were coming, had never heard of you; Mr. Corvet's servant had never heard of you. . . .

"Is there anything in what I have told you which makes it possible for you to recollect or to explain?"

Alan shook his head, flushed, and then grew a little pale. What Sherrill told him had excited him by the coincidences it offered between events in Benjamin Corvet's life and his own; it had not made him "recollect" Corvet, but it had given definiteness and direction to his speculations as to Corvet's relation to himself.

Sherrill drew one of the large chairs nearer to Alan and sat down facing him. He felt in an inner pocket and brought out an envelope; from the envelope he took three pictures, and handed the smallest of them to Alan.

As Alan took it, he saw that it was a tintype of himself as a round-faced boy of seven.

"That is you?" Sherrill asked.

"Yes; it was taken by the photographer in Blue Rapids. We all had our pictures taken on that day — Jim, Betty, and I. Mr. Welton"— for the first time Alan consciously avoided giving the title "Father" to the man in Kansas —"sent one of me to the 'general delivery' address of the person in Chicago."

"And this?"

The second picture, Alan saw, was one that had been taken in front of the barn at the farm. It showed Alan at twelve, in overalls and barefooted, holding a stick over his head at which a shepherd dog was jumping.

"Yes; that is Shep and I — Jim's and my dog, Mr. Sherrill. It was taken by a man who stopped at the house for dinner one day; he liked Shep and wanted a picture of him; so he got me to make Shep jump, and he took it."

"You don't remember anything about the man?"

"Only that he had a camera and wanted a picture of Shep."

"Doesn't it occur to you that it was your picture he wanted, and that he had been sent to get it? I wanted your verification that these earlier pictures were of you, but this last one is easily recognizable."

Sherrill unfolded the third picture; it was larger than the others and had been folded across the middle to get it into the envelope. Alan leaned forward to look at it.

"That is the University of Kansas football team," he said. "I am the second one in the front row; I

played end my junior year and tackle when I was a senior. Mr. Corvet —?"

"Yes; Mr. Corvet had these pictures. They came into my possession day before yesterday, the day after Corvet disappeared; I do not want to tell just yet how they did that."

Alan's face, which had been flushed at first with excitement, had gone quite pale, and his hands, as he clenched and unclenched them nervously, were cold, and his lips were very dry. He could think of no possible relationship between Benjamin Corvet and himself, except one, which could account for Corvet's obtaining and keeping these pictures of him through the years. As Sherrill put the pictures back into their envelope and the envelope back into his pocket, and Alan watched him, Alan felt nearly certain now that it had not been proof of the nature of this relationship that Sherrill had been trying to get from him, but only corroboration of some knowledge, or partial knowledge, which had come to Sherrill in some other way. The existence of this knowledge was implied by Sherrill's withholding of the way he had come into possession of the pictures, and his manner showed now that he had received from Alan the confirmation for which he had been seeking.

"I think you know who I am," Alan said.

Sherrill had risen and stood looking down at him.

"You have guessed, if I am not mistaken, that you are Corvet's son."

The color flamed to Alan's face for an instant, then left it paler than before. "I thought it must be that way," he answered; "but you said he had no children."

"Benjamin Corvet and his wife had no children."

"I thought that was what you meant." A twinge twisted Alan's face; he tried to control it but for a moment could not.

Sherrill suddenly put his hand on Alan's shoulder; there was something so friendly, so affectionate in the quick, impulsive grasp of Sherrill's fingers, that Alan's heart throbbed to it; for the first time some one had touched him in full, unchecked feeling for him; for the first time, the unknown about him had failed to be a barrier and, instead, had drawn another to him.

"Do not misapprehend your father," Sherrill said quietly. "I cannot prevent what other people may think when they learn this; but I do not share such thoughts with them. There is much in this I cannot understand; but I know that it is not merely the result of what others may think it — of 'a wife in more ports than one,' as you will hear the lakemen put it. What lies under this is some great misadventure which had changed and frustrated all your father's life."

Sherrill crossed the room and rang for a servant.

"I am going to ask you to be my guest for a short time, Alan," he announced. "I have had your bag carried to your room; the man will show you which one it is."

Alan hesitated; he felt that Sherrill had not told him all he knew — that there were some things Sherrill purposely was withholding from him; but he could not force Sherrill to tell more than he wished; so after an instant's irresolution, he accepted the dismissal.

Sherrill walked with him to the door, and gave his directions to the servant; he stood watching, as Alan and the man went up the stairs. Then he went back

and seated himself in the chair Alan had occupied, and sat with hands grasping the arms of the chair while he stared into the fire.

Fifteen minutes later, he heard his daughter's footsteps and looked up. Constance halted in the door to assure herself that he was now alone; then she came to him and, seating herself on the arm of the chair, she put her hand on his thin hair and smoothed it softly; he felt for her other hand with his and found it, and held it clasped between his palms.

"You've found out who he is, father?" she asked.

"The facts have left me no doubt at all as to that, little daughter."

"No doubt that he is —— who?"

Sherrill was silent for a moment — not from uncertainty, but because of the effect which what he must say would have upon her; then he told her in almost the same words he had used to Alan. Constance started, flushed, and her hand stiffened convulsively between her father's.

They said nothing more to one another; Sherrill seemed considering and debating something within himself; and presently he seemed to come to a decision. He got up, stooped and touched his daughter's hand, and left the room. He went up the stairs and on the second floor he went to a front room and knocked. Alan's voice told him to come in. Sherrill went in and, when he had made sure that the servant was not with Alan, he closed the door carefully behind him.

Then he turned back to Alan, and for an instant stood indecisive as though he did not know how to begin what he wanted to say. As he glanced down at a key he took from his pocket, his indecision seemed to receive

direction and inspiration from it; and he put it down on Alan's dresser.

"I've brought you," he said evenly, "the key to your house."

Alan gazed at him, bewildered. "The key to my house?"

"To the house on Astor Street," Sherrill confirmed. "Your father deeded the house and its furniture and all its contents to you the day before he disappeared. I have not the deed here; it came into my hands the day before yesterday at the same time I got possession of the pictures which might — or might not, for all I knew then — be you. I have the deed down-town and will give it to you. The house is yours in fee simple, given you by your father, not bequeathed to you by him to become your property after his death. He meant by that, I think, even more than the mere acknowledgment that he is your father."

Sherrill walked to the window and stood as though looking out, but his eyes were blank with thought.

"For almost twenty years," he said, "your father, as I have told you, lived in that house practically alone; during all those years a shadow of some sort was over him. I don't know at all, Alan, what that shadow was. But it is certain that whatever it was that had changed him from the man he was when I first knew him culminated three days ago when he wrote to you. It may be that the consequences of his writing to you were such that, after he had sent the letter, he could not bring himself to face them and so has merely . . . gone away. In that case, as we stand here talking, he is still alive. On the other hand, his writing you may have precipitated something that I know nothing of. In either

case, if he has left anywhere any evidence of what it is that changed and oppressed him for all these years, or if there is any evidence of what has happened to him now, it will be found in his house."

Sherrill turned back to Alan. "It is for you — not me, Alan," he said simply, "to make that search. I have thought seriously about it, this last half hour, and have decided that is as he would want it — perhaps as he did want it — to be. He could have told me what his trouble was any time in these twenty years, if he had been willing I should know; but he never did."

Sherrill was silent for a moment.

"There are some things your father did just before he disappeared that I have not told you yet," he went on. "The reason I have not told them is that I have not yet fully decided in my own mind what action they call for from me. I can assure you, however, that it would not help you now in any way to know them."

He thought again; then glanced to the key on the dresser and seemed to recollect.

"That key," he said, "is one I made your father give me some time ago; he was at home alone so much that I was afraid something might happen to him there. He gave it me because he knew I would not misuse it. I used it, for the first time, three days ago, when, after becoming certain something had gone wrong with him, I went to the house to search for him; my daughter used it this morning when she went there to wait for you. Your father, of course, had a key to the front door like this one; his servant has a key to the servants' entrance. I do not know of any other keys."

"The servant is in charge there now?" Alan asked.

"Just now there is no one in the house. The

servant, after your father disappeared, thought that, if he had merely gone away, he might have gone back to his birthplace near Manistique, and he went up there to look for him. I had a wire from him to-day that he had not found him and was coming back."

Sherrill waited a moment to see whether there was anything more Alan wanted to ask; then he went out.

CHAPTER IV

"ARRIVED SAFE; WELL"

AS the door closed behind Sherrill, Alan went over to the dresser and picked up the key which Sherrill had left. It was, he saw, a flat key of a sort common twenty years before, not of the more recent corrugated shape. As he looked at it and then away from it, thoughtfully turning it over and over in his fingers, it brought no sense of possession to him. Sherrill had said the house was his, had been given him by his father; but that fact could not actually make it his in his realization. He could not imagine himself owning such a house or what he would do with it if it were his. He put the key, after a moment, on the ring with two or three other keys he had, and dropped them into his pocket; then he crossed to a chair and sat down.

He found, as he tried now to disentangle the events of the afternoon, that from them, and especially from his last interview with Sherrill, two facts stood out most clearly. The first of these related more directly to his father — to Benjamin Corvet. When such a man as Benjamin Corvet must have been, disappears — when, without warning and without leaving any account of himself he vanishes from among those who knew him — the persons most closely interested pass through three stages of anxiety. They doubt first whether the disappearance is real and whether inquiry on their part

will not be resented; they waken next to realization that the man is actually gone, and that something must be done; the third stage is open and public inquiry. Whatever might be the nature of the information Sherrill was withholding from him, Alan saw that its effect on Sherrill had been to shorten very greatly Sherrill's time of doubt as to Corvet's actual disappearance. The Sherrills — particularly Sherrill himself — had been in the second stage of anxiety when Alan came; they had been awaiting Alan's arrival in the belief that Alan could give them information which would show them what must be "done" about Corvet. Alan had not been able to give them this information; but his coming, and his interview with Sherrill, had strongly influenced Sherrill's attitude. Sherrill had shrunk, still more definitely and consciously, after that, from prying into the affairs of his friend; he had now, strangely, almost withdrawn himself from the inquiry, and had given it over to Alan.

Sherrill had spoken of the possibility that something might have "happened" to Covert; but it was plain he did not believe he had met with actual violence. He had left it to Alan to examine Corvet's house; but he had not urged Alan to examine it at once; he had left the time of the examination to be determined by Alan. This showed clearly that Sherrill believed — perhaps had sufficient reason for believing — that Corvet had simply "gone away." The second of Alan's two facts related even more closely and personally to Alan himself. Corvet, Sherrill had said, had married in 1889. But Sherrill in long knowledge of his friend, had shown firm conviction that there had been no mere vulgar liaison in Corvet's life. Did this mean that there might

have been some previous marriage of Alan's father — some marriage which had strangely overlapped and nullified his public marriage? In that case, Alan could be, not only in fact but legally, Corvet's son; and such things as this, Alan knew, had sometimes happened, and had happened by a strange combination of events, innocently for all parties. Corvet's public separation from his wife, Sherrill had said, had taken place in 1897, but the actual separation between them might, possibly, have taken place long before that.

Alan resolved to hold these questions in abeyance; he would not accept or grant the stigma which his relationship to Corvet seemed to attach to himself until it had been proved to him. He had come to Chicago expecting, not to find that there had never been anything wrong, but to find that the wrong had been righted in some way at last. But what was most plain of all to him, from what Sherrill had told him, was that the wrong — whatever it might be — had not been righted; it existed still.

The afternoon had changed swiftly into night; dusk had been gathering during his last talk with Sherrill, so that he hardly had been able to see Sherrill's face, and just after Sherrill had left him, full dark had come. Alan did not know how long he had been sitting in the darkness thinking out these things; but now a little clock which had been ticking steadily in the blackness tinkled six. Alan heard a knock at his door, and when it was repeated, he called, "Come in."

The light which came in from the hall, as the door was opened, showed a man servant. The man, after a respectful inquiry, switched on the light. He crossed into the adjoining room — a bedroom; the room where

Alan was, he thought, must be a dressing room, and there was a bath between. Presently the man reappeared, and moved softly about the room, unpacking Alan's suitcase. He hung Alan's other suit in the closet on hangers; he put the linen, except for one shirt, in the dresser drawers, and he put Alan's few toilet things with the ivory-backed brushes and comb and other articles on the dressing stand.

Alan watched him queerly; no one except himself ever had unpacked Alan's suitcase before; the first time he had gone away to college — it was a brand new suitcase then —" mother " had packed it; after that first time, Alan had packed and unpacked it. It gave him an odd feeling now to see some one else unpacking his things. The man, having finished and taken everything out, continued to look in the suitcase for something else.

" I beg pardon, sir," he said finally, " but I cannot find your buttons."

" I've got them on," Alan said. He took them out and gave them to the valet with a smile; it was good to have something to smile at, if it was only the realization that he never had thought before of any one's having more than one set of buttons for ordinary shirts. Alan wondered, with a sort of trepidation, whether the man would expect to stay and help him dress; but he only put the buttons in the clean shirt and reopened the dresser drawers and laid out a change of things.

" Is there anything else, sir? " he asked.

" Nothing, thank you," Alan said.

" I was to tell you, sir, Mr. Sherrill is sorry he cannot be at home to dinner to-night. Mrs. Sherrill and Miss Sherrill will be here. Dinner is at seven, sir."

Alan dressed slowly, after the man had gone; and at one minute before seven he went down-stairs.

There was no one in the lower hall and, after an instant of irresolution and a glance into the empty drawing-room, he turned into the small room at the opposite side of the hall. A handsome, stately, rather large woman, whom he found there, introduced herself to him formally as Mrs. Sherrill.

He knew from Sherrill's mention of the year of their marriage that Mrs. Sherrill's age must be about forty-five, but if he had not known this, he would have thought her ten years younger. In her dark eyes and her carefully dressed, coal-black hair, and in the contour of her youthful looking, handsome face, he could not find any such pronounced resemblance to her daughter as he had seen in Lawrence Sherrill. Her reserved, yet almost too casual acceptance of Alan's presence, told him that she knew all the particulars about himself which Sherrill had been able to give; and as Constance came down the stairs and joined them half a minute later, Alan was certain that she also knew.

Yet there was in her manner toward Alan a difference from that of her mother — a difference which seemed almost opposition. Not that Mrs. Sherrill's was unfriendly or critical; rather, it was kind with the sort of reserved kindness which told Alan, almost as plainly as words, that she had not been able to hold so charitable a conviction in regard to Corvet's relationship with Alan as her husband held, but that she would be only the more considerate to Alan for that. It was this kindness which Constance set herself to oppose, and which she opposed as reservedly and as subtly as it was expressed. It gave Alan a strange, exhilarating sensa-

tion to realize that, as the three talked together, this girl was defending him.

Not him alone, of course, or him chiefly. It was Benjamin Corvet, her friend, whom she was defending primarily; yet it was Alan too; and all went on without a word about Benjamin Corvet or his affairs being spoken.

Dinner was announced, and they went into the great dining-room, where the table with its linen, silver, and china gleamed under shaded lights. The oldest and most dignified of the three men servants who waited upon them in the dining-room Alan thought must be a butler — a species or creature of whom Alan had heard but never had seen; the other servants, at least, received and handed things through him, and took their orders from him. As the silent-footed servants moved about, and Alan kept up a somewhat strained conversation with Mrs. Sherrill — a conversation in which no reference to his own affairs was yet made — he wondered whether Constance and her mother always dressed for dinner in full evening dress as now, or whether they were going out. A word from Constance to her mother told him this latter was the case, and while it did not give complete answer to his internal query, it showed him his first glimpse of social engagements as a part of the business of life. In spite of the fact that Benjamin Corvet, Sherrill's close friend, had disappeared — or perhaps because he had disappeared and, as yet, it was not publicly known — their and Sherrill's engagements had to be fulfilled.

What Sherrill had told Alan of his father had been iterating itself again and again in Alan's thoughts; now he recalled that Sherrill had said that his daughter

believed that Corvet's disappearance had had something to do with her. Alan had wondered at the moment how that could be; and as he watched her across the table and now and then exchanged a comment with her, it puzzled him still more. He had opportunity to ask her when she waited with him in the library, after dinner was finished and her mother had gone up-stairs; but he did not see then how to go about it.

"I'm sorry," she said to him, "that we can't be home to-night; but perhaps you would rather be alone?"

He did not answer that.

"Have you a picture here, Miss Sherrill, of — my father?" he asked.

"Uncle Benny had had very few pictures taken; but there is one here."

She went into the study, and came back with a book open at a half-tone picture of Benjamin Corvet. Alan took it from her and carried it quickly closer to the light. The face that looked up to him from the heavily glazed page was regular of feature, handsome in a way, and forceful. There were imagination and vigor of thought in the broad, smooth forehead; the eyes were strangely moody and brooding; the mouth was gentle, rather kindly; it was a queerly impelling, haunting face. This was his father! But, as Alan held the picture, gazing down upon it, the only emotion which came to him was realization that he felt none. He had not expected to know his father from strangers on the street; but he had expected, when told that his father was before him, to feel through and through him the call of a common blood. Now, except for consternation at his own lack of feeling, he had no emotion of any sort; he could not attach to this man, because he bore the

name which some one had told him was his father's, the passions which, when dreaming of his father, he had felt.

As he looked up from the picture to the girl who had given it to him, startled at himself and believing she must think his lack of feeling strange and unnatural, he surprised her gazing at him with wetness in her eyes. He fancied at first it must be for his father, and that the picture had brought back poignantly her fears. But she was not looking at the picture, but at him; and when his eyes met hers, she quickly turned away.

His own eyes filled, and he choked. He wanted to thank her for her manner to him in the afternoon, for defending his father and him, as she had at the dinner table, and now for this unplanned, impulsive sympathy when she saw how he had not been able to feel for this man who was his father and how he was dismayed by it. But he could not put his gratitude in words.

A servant's voice came from the door, startling him.

"Mrs. Sherrill wishes you told she is waiting, Miss Sherrill."

"I'll be there at once." Constance, also, seemed startled and confused; but she delayed and looked back to Alan.

"If — if we fail to find your father," she said, "I want to tell you what a man he was."

"Will you?" Alan asked. "Will you?"

She left him swiftly, and he heard her mother's voice in the hall. A motor door closed sharply, after a minute or so; then the house door closed. Alan stood still a moment longer, then, remembering the book which he held, he drew a chair up to the light, and read the short, dry biography of his father printed on the page

opposite the portrait. It summarized in a few hundred words his father's life. He turned to the cover of the book and read its title, "Year Book of the Great Lakes," and a date of five years before; then he looked through it. It consisted in large part, he saw, merely of lists of ships, their kind, their size, the date when they were built, and their owners. Under this last head he saw some score of times the name "Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman." There was a separate list of engines and boilers, and when they had been built and by whom. There was a chronological table of events during the year upon the lakes. Then he came to a part headed "Disasters of the Year," and he read some of them; they were short accounts, drily and unfeelingly put, but his blood thrilled to these stories of drowning, freezing, blinded men struggling against storm and ice and water, and conquering or being conquered by them. Then he came to his father's picture and biography once more and, with it, to pictures of other lakemen and their biographies. He turned to the index and looked for Sherrill's name, and then Spearman's; finding they were not in the book, he read some of the other ones.

There was a strange similarity, he found, in these biographies, among themselves as well as to that of his father. These men had had, the most of them, no tradition of seamanship, such as Sherrill had told him he himself had had. They had been sons of lumbermen, of farmers, of mill hands, miners, or fishermen. They had been very young for the most part, when they had heard and answered the call of the lakes — the ever-swelling, fierce demand of lumber, grain, and ore for outlet; and they had lived hard; life had been violent,

and raw, and brutal to them. They had sailed ships, and built ships, and owned and lost them; they had fought against nature and against man to keep their ships, and to make them profitable, and to get more of them. In the end a few, a very few comparatively, had survived; by daring, by enterprise, by taking great chances, they had thrust their heads above those of their fellows; they had come to own a half dozen, a dozen, perhaps a score of bottoms, and to have incomes of fifty, of a hundred, of two hundred thousand dollars a year.

Alan shut the book and sat thoughtful. He felt strongly the immensity, the power, the grandeur of all this; but he felt also its violence and its fierceness. What might there not have been in the life of his father who had fought up and made a way for himself through such things?

The tall clock in the hall struck nine. He got up and went out into the hall and asked for his hat and coat. When they had been brought him, he put them on and went out.

The snow had stopped some time before; a strong and increasing wind had sprung up, which Alan, with knowledge of the wind across his prairies, recognized as an aftermath of the greater storm that had produced it; for now the wind was from the opposite direction — from the west. He could see from the Sherrills' doorstep, when he looked toward the lighthouse at the harbor mouth winking red, white, red, white, at him, that this offshore wind was causing some new commotion and upheaval among the ice-floes; they groaned and labored and fought against the opposing pressure of the waves, under its urging.

He went down the steps and to the corner and turned west to Astor Street. When he reached the house of his father, he stopped under a street-lamp, looking up at the big, stern old mansion questioningly. It had taken on a different look for him since he had heard Sherrill's account of his father; there was an appeal to him that made his throat grow tight, in its look of being unoccupied, in the blank stare of its unlighted windows which contrasted with the lighted windows in the houses on both sides, and in the slight evidences of disrepair about it. He waited many minutes, his hand upon the key in his pocket; yet he could not go in, but instead walked on down the street, his thoughts and feelings in a turmoil.

He could not call up any sense that the house was his, any more than he had been able to when Sherrill had told him of it. He own a house on that street! Yet was that in itself any more remarkable than that he should be the guest, the friend of such people as the Sherrills? No one as yet, since Sherrill had told him he was Corvet's son, had called him by name; when they did, what would they call him? Alan Conrad still? Or Alan Corvet?

He noticed, up a street to the west, the lighted sign of a drug store and turned up that way; he had promised, he had recollected now, to write to . . . those in Kansas — he could not call them "father" and "mother" any more — and tell them what he had discovered as soon as he arrived. He could not tell them that, but he could write them at least that he had arrived safely and was well. He bought a postcard in the drug store, and wrote just, "Arrived safely; am well" to John Welton in Kansas. There was a little

vending machine upon the counter, and he dropped in a penny and got a box of matches and put them in his pocket.

He mailed the card and turned back to Astor Street; and he walked more swiftly now, having come to his decision, and only shot one quick look up at the house as he approached it. With what had his father shut himself up within that house for twenty years? And was it there still? And was it from that that Benjamin Corvet had fled? He saw no one in the street, and was certain no one was observing him as, taking the key from his pocket, he ran up the steps and unlocked the outer door. Holding this door open to get the light from the street lamp, he fitted the key into the inner door; then he closed the outer door. For fully a minute, with fast beating heart and a sense of expectation of he knew not what, he kept his hand upon the key before he turned it; then he opened the door and stepped into the dark and silent house.

CHAPTER V

AN ENCOUNTER

ALAN, standing in the darkness of the hall, felt in his pocket for his matches and struck one on the box. The light showed the hall in front of him, reaching back into some vague, distant darkness, and great rooms with wide portièred doorways gaping on both sides. He turned into the room upon his right, glanced to see that the shades were drawn on the windows toward the street, then found the switch and turned on the electric light.

As he looked around, he fought against his excitement and feeling of expectancy; it was — he told himself — after all, merely a vacant house, though bigger and more expensively furnished than any he ever had been in except the Sherrills; and Sherrill's statement to him had implied that anything there might be in it which could give the reason for his father's disappearance would be probably only a paper, a record of some kind. It was unlikely that a thing so easily concealed as that could be found by him on his first examination of the place; what he had come here for now — he tried to make himself believe — was merely to obtain whatever other information it could give him about his father and the way his father had lived, before Sherrill and he had any other conversation.

Alan had not noticed, when he stepped into the hall

in the morning, whether the house then had been heated; now he appreciated that it was quite cold and, probably, had been cold for the three days since his father had gone, and his servant had left to look for him. Coming from the street, it was not the chilliness of the house he felt but the stillness of the dead air; when a house is heated, there is always some motion of the air, but this air was stagnant. Alan had dropped his hat on a chair in the hall; he unbuttoned his overcoat but kept it on, and stuffed his gloves into his pocket.

A light in a single room, he thought, would not excite curiosity or attract attention from the neighbors or any one passing in the street; but lights in more than one room might do that. He resolved to turn off the light in each room as he left it, before lighting the next one.

It had been a pleasant as well as a handsome house, if he could judge by the little of it he could see, before the change had come over his father. The rooms were large with high ceilings. The one where he stood, obviously was a library; bookshelves reached three quarters of the way to the ceiling on three of its walls except where they were broken in two places by doorways, and in one place on the south wall by an open fireplace. There was a big library table-desk in the center of the room, and a stand with a shaded lamp upon it nearer the fireplace. A leather-cushioned Morris chair — a lonely, meditative-looking chair — was by the stand and at an angle toward the hearth; the rug in front of it was quite worn through and showed the floor underneath. A sympathy toward his father, which Sherrill had not been able to make him feel, came to Alan as he reflected how many days and nights Ben-

jamin Corvet must have passed reading or thinking in that chair before his restless feet could have worn away the tough, Oriental fabric of the rug.

There were several magazines on the top of the large desk, some unwrapped, some still in their wrappers; Alan glanced at them and saw that they all related to technical and scientific subjects. The desk evidently had been much used and had many drawers; Alan pulled one open and saw that it was full of papers; but his sensation as he touched the top one made him shut the drawer again and postpone prying of that sort until he had looked more thoroughly about the house.

He went to the door of the connecting room and looked into it. This room, dusky in spite of the light which shone past him through the wide doorway, was evidently another library; or rather it appeared to have been the original library, and the front room had been converted into a library to supplement it. The book-cases here were built so high that a little ladder on wheels was required for access to the top shelves. Alan located the light switch in the room; then he returned, switched off the light in the front room, crossed in the darkness into the second room, and pressed the switch.

A weird, uncanny, half wail, half moan, coming from the upper hall, suddenly filled the house. Its unexpectedness and the nature of the sound stirred the hair upon his head, and he started back; then he pressed the switch again, and the noise stopped. He lighted another match, found the right switch, and turned on the light. Only after discovering two long tiers of white and black keys against the north wall did Alan understand that the switch must control the motor working the bellows of an organ which had pipes in the upper hall; it was

the sort of organ that can be played either with fingers or by means of a paper roll; a book of music had fallen upon the keys, so that one was pressed down, causing the note to sound when the bellows pumped.

But having accounted for the sound did not immediately end the start that it had given Alan. He had the feeling which so often comes to one in an unfamiliar and vacant house that there was some one in the house with him. He listened and seemed to hear another sound in the upper hall, a footstep. He went out quickly to the foot of the stairs and looked up them.

"Is any one here?" he called. "Is any one here?"

His voice brought no response. He went half way up the curve of the wide stairway, and called again, and listened; then he fought down the feeling he had had; Sherrill had said there would be no one in the house, and Alan was certain there was no one. So he went back to the room where he had left the light.

The center of this room, like the room next to it, was occupied by a library table-desk. He pulled open some of the drawers in it; one or two had blue prints and technical drawings in them; the others had only the miscellany which accumulates in a room much used. There were drawers also under the bookcases all around the room; they appeared, when Alan opened some of them, to contain pamphlets of various societies, and the scientific correspondence of which Sherrill had told him. He looked over the titles of some of the books on the shelves — a multitude of subjects, anthropology, exploration, deep-sea fishing, ship-building, astronomy. The books in each section of the shelves seemed to correspond in subject with the pamphlets and correspondence in the drawer beneath, and these, by their dates, to

divide themselves into different periods during the twenty years that Benjamin Corvet had lived alone here.

Alan felt that seeing these things was bringing his father closer to him; they gave him a little of the feeling he had been unable to get when he looked at his father's picture. He could realize better now the lonely, restless man, pursued by some ghost he could not kill, taking up for distraction one subject of study after another, exhausting each in turn until he could no longer make it engross him, and then absorbing himself in the next.

These two rooms evidently had been the ones most used by his father; the other rooms on this floor, as Alan went into them one by one, he found spoke far less intimately of Benjamin Corvet. A dining-room was in the front of the house to the north side of the hall; a service room opened from it, and on the other side of the service room was what appeared to be a smaller dining-room. The service room communicated both by dumb waiter and stairway with rooms below; Alan went down the stairway only far enough to see that the rooms below were servants' quarters; then he came back, turned out the light on the first floor, struck another match, and went up the stairs to the second story.

The rooms opening on to the upper hall, it was plain to him, though their doors were closed, were mostly bedrooms. He put his hand at hazard on the nearest door and opened it. As he caught the taste and smell of the air in the room — heavy, colder, and deader even than the air in the rest of the house — he hesitated; then with his match he found the light switch.

The room and the next one which communicated with it evidently were — or had been — a woman's bedroom

and boudoir. The hangings, which were still swaying from the opening of the door, had taken permanently the folds in which they had hung for many years; there were the scores of long-time idleness, not of use, in the rugs and upholstery of the chairs. The bed, however, was freshly made up, as though the bed clothing had been changed occasionally. Alan went through the bedroom to the door of the boudoir, and saw that that too had the same look of unoccupancy and disuse. On the low dressing table were scattered such articles as a woman starting on a journey might think it not worth while to take with her. There was no doubt that these were the rooms of his father's wife.

Had his father preserved them thus, as she had left them, in the hope that she might come back, permitting himself to fix no time when he abandoned that hope, or even to change them after he had learned that she was dead? Alan thought not; Sherrill had said that Corvet had known from the first that his separation from his wife was permanent. The bed made up, the other things neglected, and evidently looked after or dusted only at long separated periods, looked more as though Corvet had shrunk from seeing them or even thinking of them, and had left them to be looked after wholly by the servant, without ever being able to bring himself to give instructions that they should be changed. Alan felt that he would not be surprised to learn that his father never had entered these ghostlike rooms since the day his wife had left him.

On the top of a chest of high drawers in a corner near the dressing table were some papers. Alan went over to look at them; they were invitations, notices of concerts and of plays twenty years old — the mail,

probably, of the morning she had gone away, left where her maid or she herself had laid them, and only picked up and put back there at the times since when the room was dusted. As Alan touched them, he saw that his fingers left marks in the dust on the smooth top of the chest; he noticed that some one else had touched the things and made marks of the same sort as he had made. The freshness of these other marks startled him; they had been made within a day or so. They could not have been made by Sherrill, for Alan had noticed that Sherrill's hands were slender and delicately formed; Corvet, too, was not a large man; Alan's own hand was of good size and powerful, but when he put his fingers over the marks the other man had made, he found that the other hand must have been larger and more powerful than his own. Had it been Corvet's servant? It might have been, though the marks seemed too fresh for that; for the servant, Sherrill had said, had left the day Corvet's disappearance was discovered.

Alan pulled open the drawers to see what the other man might have been after. It had not been the servant; for the contents of the drawers — old brittle lace and woman's clothing — were tumbled as though they had been pulled out and roughly and inexpertly pushed back; they still showed the folds in which they had lain for years and which recently had been disarranged.

This proof that some one had been prying about in the house before himself and since Corvet had gone, startled Alan and angered him. It brought him suddenly a sense of possession which he had not been able to feel when Sherrill had told him the house was his; it brought an impulse of protection of these things about him. Who had been searching in Benjamin Corvet's — in

Alan's house? He pushed the drawers shut hastily and hurried across the hall to the room opposite. In this room — plainly Benjamin Corvet's bedroom — were no signs of intrusion. He went to the door of the room connecting with it, turned on the light, and looked in. It was a smaller room than the others and contained a roll-top desk and a cabinet. The cover of the desk was closed, and the drawers of the cabinet were shut and apparently undisturbed. Alan recognized that probably in this room he would find the most intimate and personal things relating to his father; but before examining it, he turned back to inspect the bedroom.

It was a carefully arranged and well-cared-for room, plainly in constant use. A reading stand, with a lamp, was beside the bed with a book marked about the middle. On the dresser were hair-brushes and a comb, and a box of razors, none of which were missing. When Benjamin Corvet had gone away, he had not taken anything with him, even toilet articles. With the other things on the dresser, was a silver frame for a photograph with a cover closed and fastened over the portrait; as Alan took it up and opened it, the stiffness of the hinges and the edges of the lid gummed to the frame by disuse, showed that it was long since it had been opened. The picture was of a woman of perhaps thirty — a beautiful woman, dark-haired, dark-eyed, with a refined, sensitive, spiritual-looking face. The dress she wore was the same, Alan suddenly recognized, which he had seen and touched among the things in the chest of drawers; it gave him a queer feeling now to have touched her things. He felt instinctively, as he held the picture and studied it, that it could have been no vulgar bickering between wife and husband, nor any caprice of a

dissatisfied woman, that had made her separate herself from her husband. The photographer's name was stamped in one corner, and the date — 1894, the year after Alan had been born.

But Alan felt that the picture and the condition of her rooms across the hall did not shed any light on the relations between her and Benjamin Corvet; rather they obscured them; for his father neither had put the picture away from him and devoted her rooms to other uses, nor had he kept the rooms arranged and ready for her return and her picture so that he would see it. He would have done one or the other of these things, Alan thought, if it were she his father had wronged — or, at least, if it were only she.

Alan reclosed the case, and put the picture down; then he went into the room with the desk. He tried the cover of the desk, but it appeared to be locked; after looking around vainly for a key, he tried again, exerting a little more force, and this time the top went up easily, tearing away the metal plate into which the claws of the lock clasped and the two long screws which had held it. He examined the lock, surprised, and saw that the screws must have been merely set into the holes; scars showed where a chisel or some metal implement had been thrust in under the top to force it up. The pigeonholes and little drawers in the upper part of the desk, as he swiftly opened them, he found entirely empty. He hurried to the cabinet; the drawers of the cabinet too had been forced, and very recently; for the scars and the splinters of wood were clean and fresh. These drawers and the drawers in the lower part of the desk either were empty, or the papers in them had been disarranged and tumbled in confusion, as though some

one had examined them hastily and tossed them back.

Sherrill had not done that, nor any one who had a business to be there. If Benjamin Corvet had emptied some of those drawers before he went away, he would not have relocked empty drawers. To Alan, the marks of violence and roughness were unmistakably the work of the man with the big hands who had left marks upon the top of the chest of drawers; and the feeling that he had been in the house very recently was stronger than ever.

Alan ran out into the hall and listened; he heard no sound; but he went back to the little room more excited than before. For what had the other man been searching? For the same things which Alan was looking for? And had the other man got them? Who might the other be, and what might be his connection with Benjamin Corvet? Alan had no doubt that everything of importance must have been taken away, but he would make sure of that. He took some of the papers from the drawers and began to examine them; after nearly an hour of this, he had found only one article which appeared connected in any way with what Sherrill had told him or with Alan himself. In one of the little drawers of the desk he found several books, much worn as though from being carried in a pocket, and one of these contained a series of entries stretching over several years. These listed an amount — $150.— opposite a series of dates with only the year and the month given, and there was an entry for every second month.

Alan felt his fingers trembling as he turned the pages of the little book and found at the end of the list a blank, and below, in the same hand but in writing which had changed slightly with the passage of years, another

date and the confirming entry of $1,500. The other papers and books were only such things as might accumulate during a lifetime on the water and in business — government certificates, manifests, boat schedules of times long gone by, and similar papers. Alan looked through the little book again and put it in his pocket. It was, beyond doubt, his father's memorandum of the sums sent to Blue Rapids for Alan; it told him that here he had been in his father's thoughts; in this little room, within a few steps from those deserted apartments of his wife, Benjamin Corvet had sent "Alan's dollar"— that dollar which had been such a subject of speculation in his childhood for himself and for all the other children. He grew warm at the thought as he began putting the other things back into the drawers.

He started and straightened suddenly; then he listened attentively, and his skin, warm an instant before, turned cold and prickled. Somewhere within the house, unmistakably on the floor below him, a door had slammed. The wind, which had grown much stronger in the last hour, was battering the windows and whining round the corners of the building; but the house was tightly closed; it could not be the wind that had blown the door shut. Some one — it was beyond question now, for the realization was quite different from the feeling he had had about that before — was in the house with him. Had his father's servant come back? That was impossible; Sherrill had received a wire from the man that day, and he could not get back to Chicago before the following morning at the earliest. But the servant, Sherrill had said, was the only other one besides his father who had a key. Was it . . . his

father who had come back? That, though not impossible, seemed improbable.

Alan stooped quickly, unlaced and stripped off his shoes, and ran out into the hall to the head of the stairs where he looked down and listened. From here the sound of some one moving about came to him distinctly; he could see no light below, but when he ran down to the turn of the stairs, it became plain that there was a very dim and flickering light in the library. He crept on farther down the staircase. His hands were cold and moist from his excitement, and his body was hot and trembling.

Whoever it was that was moving about down-stairs, even if he was not one who had a right to be there, at least felt secure from interruption. He was going with heavy step from window to window; where he found a shade up, he pulled it down brusquely and with a violence which suggested great strength under a nervous strain; a shade, which had been pulled down, flew up, and the man damned it as though it had startled him; then, after an instant, he pulled it down again.

Alan crept still farther down and at last caught sight of him. The man was not his father; he was not a servant; it was equally sure at the same time that he was not any one who had any business to be in the house and that he was not any common housebreaker.

He was a big, young-looking man, with broad shoulders and very evident vigor; Alan guessed his age at thirty-five; he was handsome — he had a straight forehead over daring, deep-set eyes; his nose, lips, and chin were powerfully formed; and he was expensively and

very carefully dressed. The light by which Alan saw these things came from a flat little pocket searchlight that the man carried in one hand, which threw a little brilliant circle of light as he directed it; and now, as the light chanced to fall on his other hand — powerful and heavily muscled — Alan recollected the look and size of the finger prints on the chest of drawers up-stairs. He did not doubt that this was the same man who had gone through the desk; but since he had already rifled the desks, what did he want here now? As the man moved out of sight, Alan crept on down as far as the door to the library; the man had gone on into the rear room, and Alan went far enough into the library so he could see him.

He had pulled open one of the drawers in the big table in the rear room — the room where the organ was and where the bookshelves reached to the ceiling — and with his light held so as to show what was in it, he was tumbling over its contents and examining them. He went through one after another of the drawers of the table like this; after examining them, he rose and kicked the last one shut disgustedly; he stood looking about the room questioningly, then he started toward the front room.

He cast the light of his torch ahead of him; but Alan had time to anticipate his action and to retreat to the hall. He held the hangings a little way from the door jamb so he could see into the room. If this man were the same who had looted the desk up-stairs, it was plain that he had not procured there what he wanted or all of what he wanted; and now he did not know where next to look.

He had, as yet, neither seen nor heard anything to

alarm him, and as he went to the desk in the front room and peered impatiently into the drawers, he slammed them shut, one after another. He straightened and stared about. "Damn Ben! Damn Ben!" he ejaculated violently and returned to the rear room. Alan, again following him, found him on his knees in front of one of the drawers under the bookcases. As he continued searching through the drawers, his irritation became greater and greater. He jerked one drawer entirely out of its case, and the contents flew in every direction; swearing at it, and damning "Ben" again, he gathered up the letters. One suddenly caught his attention; he began reading it closely, then snapped it back into the drawer, crammed the rest on top of it, and went on to the next of the files. He searched in this manner through half a dozen drawers, plainly finding nothing at all he wanted; he dragged some of the books from their cases, felt behind them and shoved back some of the books but dropped others on the floor, and blasphemy burst from him.

He cursed "Ben" again and again, and himself, and God; he damned men by name, but so violently and incoherently that Alan could not make out the names; terribly he swore at men living and men "rotting in Hell." The beam of light from the torch in his hand swayed aside and back and forth. Without warning, suddenly it caught Alan as he stood in the dark of the front room; and as the dim white circle of light gleamed into Alan's face, the man looked that way and saw him.

The effect of this upon the man was so strange and so bewildering to Alan that Alan could only stare at him. The big man seemed to shrink into himself and

to shrink back and away from Alan. He roared out something in a bellow thick with fear and horror; he seemed to choke with terror. There was nothing in his look akin to mere surprise or alarm at realizing that another was there and had been seeing and overhearing him. The light which he still gripped swayed back and forth and showed him Alan again, and he raised his arm before his face as he recoiled.

The consternation of the man was so complete that it checked Alan's rush toward him; he halted, then advanced silently and watchfully. As he went forward, and the light shone upon his face again, the big man cried out hoarsely:

"Damn you — damn you, with the hole above your eye! The bullet got you! And now you've got Ben! But you can't get me! Go back to Hell! You can't get me! I'll get you — I'll get you! You — can't save the *Miwaka!*"

He drew back his arm and with all his might hurled the flashlight at Alan. It missed and crashed somewhere behind him, but did not go out; the beam of light shot back and wavered and flickered over both of them, as the torch rolled on the floor. Alan rushed forward and, thrusting through the dark, his hand struck the man's chest and seized his coat.

The man caught at and seized Alan's arm; he seemed to feel of it and assure himself of its reality.

"Flesh! Flesh!" he roared in relief; and his big arms grappled Alan. As they struggled, they stumbled and fell to the floor, the big man underneath. His hand shifted its hold and caught Alan's throat; Alan got an arm free and, with all his force, struck the man's face. The man struck back — a heavy blow on

the side of Alan's head which dizzied him but left him strength to strike again, and his knuckles reached the man's face once more, but he got another heavy blow in return. The man was grappling no longer; he swung Alan to one side and off of him, and rolled himself away. He scrambled to his feet and dashed out through the library, across the hall, and into the service room. Alan heard his feet clattering down the stairway to the floor beneath. Alan got to his feet; dizzied and not yet familiar with the house, he blundered against a wall and had to feel his way along it to the service room; as he slipped and stumbled down the stairway, a door closed loudly at the end of the corridor he had seen at the foot of the stairs. He ran along the corridor to the door; it had closed with a spring lock, and seconds passed while he felt in the dark for the catch; he found it and tore the door open, and came out suddenly into the cold air of the night in a paved passageway beside the house which led in one direction to the street and in the other to a gate opening on the alley. He ran forward to the street and looked up and down, but found it empty; then he ran back to the alley. At the end of the alley, where it intersected the cross street, the figure of the man running away appeared suddenly out of the shadows, then disappeared; Alan, following as far as the street, could see nothing more of him; this street too was empty.

He ran a little farther and looked, then he went back to the house. The side door had swung shut again and latched. He felt in his pocket for his key and went around to the front door. The snow upon the steps had been swept away, probably by the servant who had come to the house earlier in the day with Constano-

Sherrill, but some had fallen since; the footsteps made in the early afternoon had been obliterated by it, but Alan could see those he had made that evening, and the marks where some one else had gone into the house and not come out again. In part it was plain, therefore, what had happened: the man had come from the south, for he had not seen the light Alan had had in the north and rear part of the house; believing no one was in the house, the man had gone in through the front door with a key. He had been some one familiar with the house; for he had known about the side door and how to reach it and that he could get out that way. This might mean no more than that he was the same who had searched through the house before; but at least it made his identity with the former intruder more certain.

Alan let himself in at the front door and turned on the light in the reading lamp in the library. The electric torch still was burning on the floor and he picked it up and extinguished it; he went up-stairs and brought down his shoes. He had seen a wood fire set ready for lighting in the library, and now he lighted it and sat before it drying his wet socks before he put on his shoes. He was still shaking and breathing fast from his struggle with the man and his chase after him, and by the strangeness of what had taken place.

When the shaft of light from the torch had flashed across Alan's face in the dark library, the man had not taken him for what he was — a living person; he had taken him for a specter. His terror and the things he had cried out could mean only that. The specter of whom? Not of Benjamin Corvet; for one of the things Alan had remarked when he saw Benjamin Corvet's picture was that he himself did not look at all like his

father. Besides, what the man had said made it certain that he did not think the specter was "Ben"; for the specter had "got Ben." Did Alan look like some one else, then? Like whom? Evidently like the man — now dead for he had a ghost — who had "got" Ben, in the big man's opinion. Who could that be?

No answer, as yet, was possible to that. But if he did look like some one, then that some one was — or had been — dreaded not only by the big man who had entered the house, but by Benjamin Corvet as well. "You got Ben!" the man had cried out. Got him? How? "But you can't get me!" he had said. "You — with the bullet hole above your eye!" What did that mean?

Alan got up and went to look at himself in the mirror he had seen in the hall. He was white, now that the flush of the fighting was going; he probably had been pale before with excitement, and over his right eye there was a round, black mark. Alan looked down at his hands; a little skin was off one knuckle, where he had struck the man, and his fingers were smudged with a black and sooty dust. He had smudged them on the papers up-stairs or else in feeling his way about the dark house, and at some time he had touched his forehead and left the black mark. That had been the "bullet hole."

The rest that the man had said had been a reference to some name; Alan had no trouble to recollect the name and, while he did not understand it at all, it stirred him queerly — "the *Miwaka*." What was that? The queer excitement and questioning that the name brought, when he repeated it to himself, was not recollection; for he could not recall ever having heard

the name before; but it was not completely strange to him. He could define the excitement it stirred only in that way.

He went back to the Morris chair; his socks were nearly dry, and he put on his shoes. He got up and paced about. Sherrill had believed that here in this house Benjamin Corvet had left — or might have left — a memorandum, a record, or an account of some sort which would explain to Alan, his son, the blight which had hung over his life. Sherrill had said that it could have been no mere intrigue, no vulgar personal sin; and the events of the night had made that very certain; for, plainly, whatever was hidden in that house involved some one else seriously, desperately. There was no other way to explain the intrusion of the sort of man whom Alan had surprised there an hour ago.

The fact that this other man searched also did not prove that Benjamin Corvet had left a record in the house, as Sherrill believed; but it certainly showed that another person believed — or feared — it. Whether or not guilt had sent Benjamin Corvet away four days ago, whether or not there had been guilt behind the ghost which had "got Ben," there was guilt in the big man's superstitious terror when he had seen Alan. A bold, powerful man like that one, when his conscience is clear, does not see a ghost. And the ghost which he had seen had a bullet hole above the brows!

Alan did not flatter himself that in any physical sense he had triumphed over that man; so far as it had gone, his adversary had had rather the better of the battle; he had endeavored to stun Alan, or perhaps do worse than stun; but after the first grapple, his pur-

pose had been to get away. But he had not fled from Alan; he had fled from discovery of who he was. Sherrill had told Alan of no one whom he could identify with this man; but Alan could describe him to Sherrill.

Alan found a lavatory and washed and straightened his collar and tie and brushed his clothes. There was a bruise on the side of his head; but though it throbbed painfully, it did not leave any visible mark. He could return now to the Sherrills'. It was not quite midnight but he believed by this time Sherrill was probably home; perhaps already he had gone to bed. Alan took up his hat and looked about the house; he was going to return and sleep here, of course; he was not going to leave the house unguarded for any long time after this; but, after what had just happened, he felt he could leave it safely for half an hour, particularly if he left a light burning within.

He did this and stepped out. The wind from the west was blowing hard, and the night had become bitter cold; yet, as Alan reached the drive, he could see far out the tossing lights of a ship and, as he went toward the Sherrills', he gazed out over the roaring water. Often on nights like this, he knew, his father must have been battling such water.

The man who answered his ring at the Sherrills' recognized him at once and admitted him; in reply to Alan's question, the servant said that Mr. Sherrill had not yet returned. When Alan went to his room, the valet appeared and, finding that Alan was packing, the man offered his service. Alan let him pack and went down-stairs; a motor had just driven up to the house.

It proved to have brought Constance and her mother; Mrs. Sherrill, after informing Alan that Mr.

Sherrill might not return until some time later, went up-stairs and did not appear again. Constance followed her mother but, ten minutes later came down-stairs.

"You're not staying here to-night?" she said.

"I wanted to say to your father," Alan explained, "that I believe I had better go over to the other house."

She came a little closer to him in her concern. "Nothing has happened here?"

"Here? You mean in this house?" Alan smiled. "No; nothing."

She seemed relieved. Alan, remembering her mother's manner, thought he understood; she knew that remarks had been made, possibly, which repeated by a servant might have offended him.

"I'm afraid it's been a hard day for you," she said.

"It's certainly been unusual," Alan admitted.

It had been a hard day for her, too, he observed; or probably the recent days, since her father's and her own good friend had gone, had been trying. She was tired now and nervously excited; but she was so young that the little signs of strain and worry, instead of making her seem older, only made her youth more apparent. The curves of her neck and her pretty, rounded shoulders were as soft as before; her lustrous, brown hair was more beautiful, and a slight flush colored her clear skin.

It had seemed to Alan, when Mrs. Sherrill had spoken to him a few minutes before, that her manner toward him had been more reserved and constrained than earlier in the evening; and he had put that down to the lateness of the hour; but now he realized that she

probably had been discussing him with Constance, and that it was somewhat in defiance of her mother that Constance had come down to speak with him again.

"Are you taking any one over to the other house with you?" she inquired.

"Any one?"

"A servant, I mean."

"No."

"Then you'll let us lend you a man from here."

"You're awfully good; but I don't think I'll need any one to-night. Mr. Corvet's — my father's man — is coming back to-morrow, I understand. I'll get along very well until then."

She was silent a moment as she looked away. Her shoulders suddenly jerked a little. "I wish you'd take some one with you," she persisted. "I don't like to think of you alone over there."

"My father must have been often alone there."

"Yes," she said. "Yes." She looked at him quickly, then away, checking a question. She wanted to ask, he knew, what he had discovered in that lonely house which had so agitated him; for of course she had noticed agitation in him. And he had intended to tell her or, rather, her father. He had been rehearsing to himself the description of the man he had met there in order to ask Sherrill about him; but now Alan knew that he was not going to refer the matter even to Sherrill just yet.

Sherrill had believed that Benjamin Corvet's disappearance was from circumstances too personal and intimate to be made a subject of public inquiry; and what Alan had encountered in Corvet's house had confirmed that belief. Sherrill further had said that

Benjamin Corvet, if he had wished Sherrill to know those circumstances, would have told them to him; but Corvet had not done that; instead, he had sent for Alan, his son. He had given his son his confidence.

Sherrill had admitted that he was withholding from Alan, for the time being, something that he knew about Benjamin Corvet; it was nothing, he had said, which would help Alan to learn about his father, or what had become of him; but perhaps Sherrill, not knowing these other things, could not speak accurately as to that. Alan determined to ask Sherrill what he had been withholding before he told him all of what had happened in Corvet's house. There was one other circumstance which Sherrill had mentioned but not explained; it occurred to Alan now.

"Miss Sherrill —" he checked himself.

"What is it?"

"This afternoon your father said that you believed that Mr. Corvet's disappearance was in some way connected with you; he said that he did not think that was so; but do you want to tell me why you thought it?"

"Yes; I will tell you." She colored quickly. "One of the last things Mr. Corvet did — in fact, the last thing we know of his doing before he sent for you — was to come to me and warn me against one of my friends."

"Warn you, Miss Sherrill? How? I mean, warn you against what?"

"Against thinking too much of him." She turned away.

Alan saw in the rear of the hall the man who had been waiting with the suitcase. It was after midnight now and, for far more than the intended half hour,

Alan had left his father's house unwatched, to be entered by the front door whenever the man, who had entered it before, returned with his key.

"I think I'll come to see your father in the morning," Alan said, when Constance looked back to him.

"You won't borrow Simons?" she asked again.

"Thank you, no."

"But you'll come over here for breakfast in the morning?"

"You want me?"

"Certainly."

"I'd like to come very much."

"Then I'll expect you." She followed him to the door when he had put on his things, and he made no objection when she asked that the man be allowed to carry his bag around to the other house. When he glanced back, after reaching the walk, he saw her standing inside the door, watching through the glass after him.

When he had dismissed Simons and reentered the house on Astor Street, he found no evidences of any disturbance while he had been gone. On the second floor, to the east of the room which had been his father's, was a bedroom which evidently had been kept as a guest chamber; Alan carried his suitcase there and made ready for bed.

The sight of Constance Sherrill standing and watching after him in concern as he started back to this house, came to him again and again and, also, her flush when she had spoken of the friend against whom Benjamin Corvet had warned her. Who was he? It had been impossible at that moment for Alan to ask her more; besides, if he had asked and she had told him,

he would have learned only a name which he could not place yet in any connection with her or with Benjamin Corvet. Whoever he was, it was plain that Constance Sherrill "thought of him"; lucky man, Alan said to himself. Yet Corvet had warned her not to think of him. . . .

Alan turned back his bed. It had been for him a tremendous day. Barely twelve hours before he had come to that house, Alan Conrad from Blue Rapids, Kansas; now . . . phrases from what Lawrence Sherrill had told him of his father were running through his mind as he opened the door of the room to be able to hear any noise in Benjamin Corvet's house, of which he was sole protector. The emotion roused by his first sight of the lake went through him again as he opened the window to the east.

Now — he was in bed — he seemed to be standing, a specter before a man blaspheming Benjamin Corvet and the souls of men dead. "And the hole above the eye! . . . The bullet got you! . . . So it's you that got Ben! . . . I'll get you! . . . You can't save the *Miwaka!*"

The *Miwaka!* The stir of that name was stronger now even than before; it had been running through his consciousness almost constantly since he had heard it. He jumped up and turned on the light and found a pencil. He did not know how to spell the name and it was not necessary to write it down; the name had taken on that definiteness and ineffaceableness of a thing which, once heard, can never again be forgotten. But, in panic that he might forget, he wrote it, guessing at the spelling — "*Miwaka.*"

It was a name, of course; but the name of what? It

repeated and repeated itself to him, after he got back into bed, until its very iteration made him drowsy.

Outside the gale whistled and shrieked. The wind, passing its last resistance after its sweep across the prairies before it leaped upon the lake, battered and clamored in its assault about the house. But as Alan became sleepier, he heard it no longer as it rattled the windows and howled under the eaves and over the roof, but as out on the lake, above the roaring and ice-crunching waves, it whipped and circled with its chill the ice-shrouded sides of struggling ships. So, with the roar of surf and gale in his ears, he went to sleep with the sole conscious connection in his mind between himself and these people, among whom Benjamin Corvet's summons had brought him, the one name "*Miwaka.*"

CHAPTER VI

CONSTANCE SHERRILL

IN the morning a great change had come over the lake. The wind still blew freshly, but no longer fiercely, from the west; and now, from before the beach beyond the drive, and from the piers and breakwaters at the harbor mouth, and from all the western shore, the ice had departed. Far out, a nearly indiscernible white line marked the ice-floe where it was traveling eastward before the wind; nearer, and with only a gleaming crystal fringe of frozen snow clinging to the shore edge, the water sparkled, blue and dimpling, under the morning sun; multitudes of gulls, hungry after the storm, called to one another and circled over the breakwaters, the piers, and out over the water as far as the eye could see; and a half mile off shore, a little work boat — a shallop twenty feet long — was put-put-ing on some errand along a path where twelve hours before no horsepower creatable by man could have driven the hugest steamer.

Constance Sherrill, awakened by the sunlight reflected from the water upon her ceiling, found nothing odd or startling in this change; it roused her but did not surprise her. Except for the short periods of her visits away from Chicago, she had lived all her life on the shore of the lake; the water — wonderful, ever

altering — was the first sight each morning. As it made wilder and more grim the desolation of a stormy day, so it made brighter and more smiling the splendor of the sunshine and, by that much more, influenced one's feelings.

Constance held by preference to the seagoing traditions of her family. Since she was a child, the lake and the life of the ships had delighted and fascinated her; very early she had discovered that, upon the lake, she was permitted privileges sternly denied upon land — an arbitrary distinction which led her to designate water, when she was a little girl, as her family's "respectable element." For while her father's investments were, in part, on the water, her mother's property all was on the land. Her mother, who was a Seaton, owned property somewhere in the city, in common with Constance's uncles; this property consisted, as Constance succeeded in ascertaining about the time she was nine, of large, wholesale grocery buildings. They and the "brand" had been in the possession of the Seaton family for many years; both Constance's uncles worked in the big buildings where the canning was done; and, when Constance was taken to visit them, she found the place most interesting — the berries and fruit coming up in great steaming cauldrons; the machines pushing the cans under the enormous faucets where the preserves ran out and then sealing the cans and pasting the bright Seaton "brand" about them. The people there were interesting — the girls with flying fingers sorting fruit, and the men pounding the big boxes together; and the great shaggy-hoofed horses which pulled the huge, groaning wagons were most fascinating. She wanted to ride on one of the

wagons; but her request was promptly and completely squashed.

It was not "done"; nor was anything about the groceries and the canning to be mentioned before visitors; Constance brought up the subject once and found out. It was different about her father's ships. She could talk about them when she wanted to; and her father often spoke of them; and any one who came to the house could speak about them. Ships, apparently, were respectable.

When she went down to the docks with her father, she could climb all over them, if she was only careful of her clothes; she could spend a day watching one of her father's boats discharging grain or another unloading ore; and, when she was twelve, for a great treat, her father took her on one of the freighters to Duluth; and for one delightful, wonderful week she chummed with the captain and mates and wheelmen and learned all the pilot signals and the way the different lighthouses winked.

Mr. Spearman, who recently had become a partner of her father's, was also on the boat upon that trip. He had no particular duty; he was just "an owner" like her father; but Constance observed that, while the captain and the mates and the engineers were always polite and respectful to her father, they asked Mr. Spearman's opinion about things in a very different way and paid real attention — not merely polite attention — when he talked. He was a most desirable sort of acquisition; for he was a friend who could come to the house at any time, and yet he, himself, had done all sorts of exciting things. He had not just gone to Harvard and then become an owner, as Constance's father had;

at fifteen, he had run away from his father's farm back from the east shore of little Traverse Bay near the northern end of Lake Michigan. At eighteen, after all sorts of adventures, he had become mate of a lumber schooner; he had "taken to steam" shortly after that and had been an officer upon many kinds of ships. Then Uncle Benny had taken him into partnership. Constance had a most exciting example of what he could do when the ship ran into a big storm on Lake Superior.

Coming into Whitefish Bay, a barge had blundered against the vessel; a seam started, and water came in so fast that it gained on the pumps. Instantly, Mr. Spearman, not the captain, was in command and, from the way he steered the ship to protect the seam and from the scheme he devised to stay the inrush of water, the pumps began to gain at once, and the ship went into Duluth safe and dry. Constance liked that in a man of the sort whom people knew. For, as the most active partner — though not the chief stockholder — of Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman, almost every one in the city knew him. He had his bachelor "rooms" in one of the newest and most fashionable of the apartment buildings facing the lake just north of the downtown city; he had become a member of the best city and country clubs; and he was welcomed quickly along the Drive, where the Sherrills' mansion was coming to be considered a characteristic "old" Chicago home.

But little over forty, and appearing even younger, Spearman was distinctly of the new generation; and Constance Sherrill was only one of many of the younger girls who found in Henry Spearman refreshing

relief from the youths who were the sons of men but who could never become men themselves. They were nice, earnest boys with all sorts of serious Marxian ideas of establishing social justice in the plants which their fathers had built; and carrying the highest motives into the city or national politics. But the industrial reformers, Constance was quite certain, never could have built up the industries with which they now, so superiorly, were finding fault; the political purifiers either failed of election or, if elected, seemed to leave politics pretty much as they had been before. The picture of Spearman, instantly appealed to and instantly in charge in the emergency, remained and became more vivid within Constance, because she never saw him except when he dominated.

And a decade most amazingly had bridged the abyss which had separated twelve years and thirty-two. At twenty-two, Constance Sherrill was finding Henry Spearman — age forty-two — the most vitalizing and interesting of the men who moved, socially, about the restricted ellipse which curved down the lake shore south of the park and up Astor Street. He had, very early, recognized that he possessed the vigor and courage to carry him far, and he had disciplined himself until the coarseness and roughness, which had sometimes offended the little girl of ten years before, had almost vanished. What crudities still came out, romantically reminded of his hard, early life on the lakes. Had there been anything in that life of his of which he had not told her — something worse than merely rough and rugged, which could strike at her? Uncle Benny's last, dramatic appeal to her had suggested that; but even at the moment when he was talking to her, fright for

Uncle Benny — not dread that there had been anything wrong in Henry's life — had most moved her. Uncle Benny very evidently was not himself. As long as Constance could remember, he had quarreled violently with Henry; his antagonism to Henry had become almost an obsession; and Constance had her father's word for it that, a greater part of the time, Uncle Benny had no just ground for his quarrel with Henry. A most violent quarrel had occurred upon that last day, and undoubtedly its fury had carried Uncle Benny to the length of going to Constance as he did.

Constance had come to this conclusion during the last gloomy and stormy days; this morning, gazing out upon the shining lake, clear blue under the wintry sun, she was more satisfied than before. Summoning her maid, she inquired first whether anything had been heard since last night of Mr. Corvet. She was quite sure, if her father had had word, he would have awakened her; and there was no news. But Uncle Benny's son, she remembered, was coming to breakfast.

Uncle Benny's son! That suggested to Constance's mother only something unpleasant, something to be avoided and considered as little as possible. But Alan — Uncle Benny's son — was not unpleasant at all; he was, in fact, quite the reverse. Constance had liked him from the moment that, confused a little by Benjamin Corvet's absence and Simons's manner in greeting him, he had turned to her for explanation; she had liked the way he had openly studied her and approved her, as she was approving him; she had liked the way he had told her of himself, and the fact that

he knew nothing of the man who proved to be his father; she had liked very much the complete absence of impulse to force or to pretend feeling when she had brought him the picture of his father — when he, amazed at himself for not feeling, had looked at her; and she had liked most of all his refusal, for himself and for his father, to accept positive stigma until it should be proved.

She had not designated any hour for breakfast, and she supposed that, coming from the country, he would believe breakfast to be early. But when she got downstairs, though it was nearly nine o'clock, he had not come; she went to the front window to watch for him, and after a few minutes she saw him approaching, looking often to the lake as though amazed by the change in it.

She went to the door and herself let him in.

"Father has gone down-town," she told him, as he took off his things. "Mr. Spearman returns from Duluth this morning, and father wished to tell him about you as soon as possible. I told father you had come to see him last night; and he said to bring you down to the office."

"I overslept, I'm afraid," Alan said.

"You slept well, then?"

"Very well — after a while."

"I'll take you down-town myself after breakfast."

She said no more but led him into the breakfast room. It was a delightful, cozy little room, Dutch furnished, with a single wide window to the east, an enormous hooded fireplace taking up half the north wall, and blue Delft tiles set above it and paneled in the walls all about the room. There were the quaint blue wind-

mills, the fishing boats, the baggy-breeked, wooden-shod folk, the canals and barges, the dikes and their guardians, and the fishing ship on the Zuyder Zee.

Alan gazed about at these with quick, appreciative interest. His quality of instantly noticing and appreciating anything unusual was, Constance thought, one of his pleasantest and best characteristics.

"I like those too; I selected them myself in Holland," she observed.

She took her place beside the coffee pot, and when he remained standing —"Mother always has her breakfast in bed; that's your place," she said.

He took the chair opposite her. There was fruit upon the table; Constance took an orange and passed the little silver basket across.

"This is such a little table; we never use it if there's more than two or three of us; and we like to help ourselves here."

"I like it very much," Alan said.

"Coffee right away or later?"

"Whenever you do. You see," he explained, smiling in a way that pleased her, "I haven't the slightest idea what else is coming or whether anything more at all is coming." A servant entered, bringing cereal and cream; he removed the fruit plates, put the cereal dish and two bowls before Constance, and went out. "And if any one in Blue Rapids," Alan went on, "had a man waiting in the dining-room and at least one other in the kitchen, they would not speak of our activities here as 'helping ourselves.' I'm not sure just how they would speak of them; we — the people I was with in Kansas — had a maidservant at one time when we were on the farm, and when we engaged her, she asked, 'Do

you do your own stretching?' That meant serving from the stove to the table, usually."

He was silent for a few moments; when he looked at her across the table again, he seemed about to speak seriously. His gaze left her face and then came back.

"Miss Sherrill," he said gravely, "what is, or was, the *Miwaka?* A ship?"

He made no attempt to put the question casually; rather, he had made it more evident that it was of concern to him by the change in his manner.

"The *Miwaka?*" Constance said.

"Do you know what it was?"

"Yes; I know; and it was a ship."

"You mean it doesn't exist any more?"

"No; it was lost a long time ago."

"On the lakes here?"

"On Lake Michigan."

"You mean by lost that it was sunk?"

"It was sunk, of course; but no one knows what happened to it — whether it was wrecked or burned or merely foundered."

The thought of the unknown fate of the ship and crew — of the ship which had sailed and never reached port and of which nothing ever had been heard but the beating of the Indian drum — set her blood tingling as it had done before, when she had been told about the ship, or when she had told others about it and the superstition connected with it. It was plain Alan Conrad had not asked about it idly; something about the *Miwaka* had come to him recently and had excited his intense concern.

"Whose ship was it?" he asked. "My father's?"

"No; it belonged to Stafford and Ramsdell. They

were two of the big men of their time in the carrying trade on the lakes, but their line has been out of business for years; both Mr. Stafford and Mr. Ramsdell were lost with the *Miwaka*."

"Will you tell me about it, and them, please?"

"I've told you almost all I can about Stafford and Ramsdell, I'm afraid; I've just heard father say that they were men who could have amounted to a great deal on the lakes, if they had lived — especially Mr. Stafford, who was very young. The *Miwaka* was a great new steel ship — built the year after I was born; it was the first of nearly a dozen that Stafford and Ramsdell had planned to build. There was some doubt among lake men about steel boats at that time; they had begun to be built very largely quite a few years before, but recently there had been some serious losses with them. Whether it was because they were built on models not fitted for the lakes, no one knew; but several of them had broken in two and sunk, and a good many men were talking about going back to wood. But Stafford and Ramsdell believed in steel and had finished this first one of their new boats.

"She left Duluth for Chicago, loaded with ore, on the first day of December, with both owners and part of their families on board. She passed the Soo on the third and went through the Straits of Mackinac on the fourth into Lake Michigan. After that, nothing was ever heard of her."

"So probably she broke in two like the others?"

"Mr. Spearman and your father both thought so; but nobody ever knew — no wreckage came ashore — no message of any sort from any one on board. A very sudden winter storm had come up and was at its

worst on the morning of the fifth. Uncle Benny — your father — told me once, when I asked him about it, that it was as severe for a time as any he had ever experienced. He very nearly lost his life in it. He had just finished laying up one of his boats — the *Martha Corvet* — at Manistee for the winter; and he and Mr. Spearman, who then was mate of the *Martha Corvet*, were crossing the lake in a tug with a crew of four men to Manitowoc, where they were going to lay up more ships. The captain and one of the deck hands of the tug were washed overboard, and the engineer was lost trying to save them. Uncle Benny and Mr. Spearman and the stoker brought the tug in. The storm was worst about five in the morning, when the *Miwaka* sunk."

"How do you know that the *Miwaka* sunk at five," Alan asked, "if no one ever heard from the ship?"

"Oh; that was told by the Drum!"

"The Drum?"

"Yes; the Indian Drum! I forgot; of course you didn't know. It's a superstition that some of the lake men have, particularly those who come from people at the other end of the lake. The Indian Drum is in the woods there, they say. No one has seen it; but many people believe that they have heard it. It's a spirit drum which beats, they say, for every ship lost on the lake. There's a particular superstition about it in regard to the *Miwaka;* for the drum beat wrong for the *Miwaka.* You see, the people about there swear that about five o'clock in the morning of the fifth, while the storm was blowing terribly, they heard the drum beating and knew that a ship was going down. They counted the sounds as it beat the roll of the dead. It

beat twenty-four before it stopped and then began to beat again and beat twenty-four; so, later, everybody knew it had been beating for the *Miwaka;* for every other ship on the lake got to port; but there were twenty-five altogether on the *Miwaka,* so either the drum beat wrong or —" she hesitated.

"Or what?"

"Or the drum was right, and some one was saved. Many people believed that. It was years before the families of the men on board gave up hope, because of the Drum; maybe some haven't given up hope yet."

Alan made no comment for a moment. Constance had seen the blood flush to his face and then leave it, and her own pulse had beat as swiftly as she rehearsed the superstition. As he gazed at her and then away, it was plain that he had heard something additional about the *Miwaka* — something which he was trying to fit into what she told him.

"That's all anybody knows?" His gaze came back to her at last.

"Yes; why did you ask about it — the *Miwaka?* I mean, how did you hear about it so you wanted to know?"

He considered an instant before replying. "I encountered a reference to the *Miwaka* — I supposed it must be a ship — in my father's house last night."

His manner, as he looked down at his coffee cup, toying with it, prevented her then from asking more; he seemed to know that she wished to press it, and he looked up quickly.

"I met my servant — my father's servant — this morning," he said.

"Yes; he got back this morning. He came here

early to report to father that he had no news of Uncle Benny; and father told him you were at the house and sent him over."

Alan was studying the coffee cup again, a queer expression on his face which she could not read.

"He was there when I woke up this morning, Miss Sherrill. I hadn't heard anybody in the house, but I saw a little table on wheels standing in the hall outside my door and a spirit lamp and a little coffee pot on it, and a man bending over it, warming the cup. His back was toward me, and he had straight black hair, so that at first I thought he was a Jap; but when he turned around, I saw he was an American Indian."

"Yes; that was Wassaquam."

"Is that his name? He told me it was Judah."

"Yes — Judah Wassaquam. He's a Chippewa from the north end of the lake. They're very religious there, most of the Indians at the foot of the lake; and many of them have a Biblical name which they use for a first name and use their Indian name for a last one."

"He called me 'Alan' and my father 'Ben.'"

"The Indians almost always call people by their first names."

"He said that he had always served 'Ben' his coffee that way before he got up, and so he had supposed he was to do the same by me; and also that, long ago, he used to be a deck hand on one of my father's ships."

"Yes; when Uncle Benny began to operate ships of his own, many of the ships on the lakes had Indians among the deck hands; some had all Indians for crews and white men only for officers. Wassaquam was on the first freighter Uncle Benny ever owned a share in; afterwards he came here to Chicago with Uncle Benny.

He's been looking after Uncle Benny all alone now for more than ten years — and he's very much devoted to him, and fully trustworthy; and besides that, he's a wonderful cook; but I've wondered sometimes whether Uncle Benny wasn't the only city man in the world who had an Indian body servant."

"You know a good deal about Indians."

"A little about the lake Indians, the Chippewas and Pottawatomies in northern Michigan."

"Recollection's a funny thing," Alan said, after considering a moment. "This morning, after seeing Judah and talking to him — or rather hearing him talk — somehow a story got running in my head. I can't make out exactly what it was — about a lot of animals on a raft; and there was some one with them — I don't know who; I can't fit any name to him; but he had a name."

Constance bent forward quickly. "Was the name Michabou?" she asked.

He returned her look, surprised. "That's it; how did you know?"

"I think I know the story; and Wassaquam would have known it too, I think, if you'd ask him; but probably he would have thought it impious to tell it, because he and his people are great Christians now. Michabou is one of the Indian names for Manitou. What else do you remember of the story."

"Not much, I'm afraid — just sort of scenes here and there; but I can remember the beginning now that you have given me the name: 'In the beginning of all things there was only water and Michabou was floating on the raft with all the animals.' Michabou, it seemed, wanted the land brought up so that men

and animals could live on it, and he asked one of the animals to go down and bring it up — "

"The beaver," Constance supplied.

"Was the beaver the first one? The beaver dived and stayed down a long time, so long that when he came up he was breathless and completely exhausted, but he had not been able to reach the bottom. Then Michabou sent down — "

"The otter."

"And he stayed down much longer than the beaver, and when he came up at last, they dragged him on to the raft quite senseless; but he hadn't been able to reach the bottom either. So the animals and Michabou himself were ready to give it up; but then the little muskrat spoke up — am I right? Was this the muskrat?"

"Yes."

"Then you can finish it for me?"

"He dived and he stayed down, the little muskrat," Constance continued, "longer than the beaver and the otter both together. Michabou and the animals waited all day for him to come up, and they watched all through the night; so then they knew he must be dead. And, sure enough, they came after a while across the body floating on the water and apparently lifeless. They dragged him onto the raft and found that his little paws were all tight shut. They forced open three of the paws and found nothing in them, but when they opened the last one, they found one grain of sand tightly clutched in it. The little muskrat had done it; he'd reached the bottom! And out of that one grain of sand, Michabou made the world."

"That's it," he said. "Now what is it?"

"The Indian story of creation — or one of them."

"Not a story of the plain Indians surely."

"No; of the Indians who live about the lakes and so got the idea that everything was water in the first place — the Indians who live on the islands and peninsulas. That's how I came to know it."

"I thought that must be it," Alan said. His hand trembled a little as he lifted his coffee cup to his lips.

Constance too flushed a little with excitement; it was a surprisingly close and intimate thing to have explored with another back into the concealments of his first child consciousness, to have aided another in the sensitive task of revealing himself to himself. This which she had helped to bring back to him must have been one of the first stories told him; he had been a very little boy, when he had been taken to Kansas, away from where he must have heard this story — the lakes.

She was a little nervous also from watching the time as told by the tiny watch on her wrist. Henry's train from Duluth must be in now; and he had not yet called her, as had been his custom recently, as soon as he returned to town after a trip. But, in a minute, a servant entered to inform her that Mr. Spearman wished to speak to her. She excused herself to Alan and hurried out. Henry was calling her from the railroad station and, he said, from a most particularly stuffy booth and, besides having a poor connection, there was any amount of noise about him; but he was very anxious to see Constance as soon as possible. Could she be in town that morning and have luncheon with him? Yes; she was going down-town very soon and, after luncheon, he could come home with her if he wished. He certainly did wish, but he couldn't tell

yet what he might have to do in the afternoon, but please would she save the evening for him. She promised and started to tell him about Alan, then recollected that Henry was going to see her father immediately at the office.

Alan was standing, waiting for her, when she returned to the breakfast room.

"Ready to go down-town?" she asked.

"Whenever you are."

"I'll be ready in a minute. I'm planning to drive; are you afraid?"

He smiled in his pleasant way as he glanced over her; she had become conscious of saying that sort of thing to tempt the smile. "Oh, I'll take the risk."

CHAPTER VII

THE DEED IN TRUST

HER little gasoline-driven car — delicate as though a jeweler had made it — was waiting for them under the canopy beside the house, when they went out. She delayed a moment to ask Alan to let down the windows; the sky was still clear, and the sunshine had become almost warm, though the breeze was sharp and cold. As the car rolled down the drive, and he turned for a long look past her toward the lake, she watched his expression.

"It's like a great shuttle, the ice there," she commented, "a monster shuttle nearly three hundred miles long. All winter it moves back and forth across the lake, from east to west and from west to east as the winds change, blocking each shore half the time and forcing the winter boats to fight it always."

"The gulls go opposite to it, I suppose, sticking to open water."

"The gulls? That depends upon the weather. 'Sea-gull, sea-gull,'" she quoted, "'sit on the sand; It's never fair weather when you're on the land.'"

Alan started a little. "What was that?" he asked.

"That rhyme? One which the wives of the lake men teach their children. Did you remember that too?"

"After you said it."

"Can you remember the rest of it?"

"'Green to Green — Red to Red,'" Alan repeated

to himself. "'Green to green' and then something about — how is it, 'Back her — back and stopper.'"

"That's from a lake rhyme too, but another one!" she cried. "And that's quite a good one. It's one of the pilot rules that every lake person knows. Some skipper and wheelsman set them to rhyme years ago, and the lake men teach the rhymes to their children so that they'll never go wrong with a ship. It keeps them clearer in their heads than any amount of government printing. Uncle Benny used to say they've saved any number of collisions.

"Meeting steamers do not dread,"

she recited,

"When you see three lights ahead!
Port your helm and show your red.
For passing steamers you should try
To keep this maxim in your eye,
Green to Green — or Red to Red —
Perfect safety — go ahead.
Both in safety and in doubt,
Always keep a good lookout;
Should there be no room to turn,
Stop your ship and go astern."

"Now we're coming to your 'back and stopper':

"If to starboard Red appear,
'Tis your duty to keep clear;
Act as judgment says is proper.
Port or starboard — back or stop her!
But when on your port is seen
A steamer with a light of Green,
There's not much for you to do —
The Green light must look out for you."

She had driven the car swiftly on the boulevard to the turn where the motorway makes west to Rush Street, then it turned south again toward the bridge. As they reached the approach to the bridge and the cars congested there, Constance was required to give all her attention to the steering; not until they were crossing the bridge was she able to glance at her companion's face.

To westward, on both sides of the river, summer boats were laid up, their decks covered with snow. On the other side, still nearer to the bridge, were some of the winter vessels; and, while the motor was on the span, the bells began ringing the alarm to clear the bridge so it could turn to let through a great steamer just in from the lake, the sun glistening on the ice covering its bows and sides back as far as Alan could see.

Forward of the big, black, red-banded funnel, a cloud of steam bellowed up and floated back, followed by another, and two deep, reverberating blasts rumbled up the river majestically, imperiously. The shrill little alarm bells on the bridge jangled more nervously and excitedly, and the policeman at the south end hastily signalled the motor cars from the city to stop, while he motioned those still on the bridge to scurry off; for a ship desired to pass.

"Can we stop and see it?" Alan appealed, as Constance ran the car from the bridge just before it began to turn.

She swung the car to the side of the street and stopped; as he gazed back, he was — she knew — seeing not only his first great ship close by, but having his first view of his people — the lake men from whom now he knew from the feeling he had found within himself,

and not only from what had been told him, that he had come.

The ship was sheathed in ice from stem to stern; tons of the gleaming, crystal metal weighed the forecastle; the rail all round had become a frozen bulwark; the boats were mere hummocks of ice; the bridge was encased, and from the top of the pilot house hung down giant stalactites which an axeman was chopping away. Alan could see the officers on the bridge, the wheelsman, the lookout; he could see the spurt of water from the ship's side as it expelled with each thrust of the pumps; he could see the whirlpool about the screw, as slowly, steadily, with signals clanging clearly somewhere below, the steamer went through the draw. From up the river ahead of it came the jangling of bells and the blowing of alarm whistles as the other bridges were cleared to let the vessel through. It showed its stern now; Alan read the name and registry aloud: "'*Groton of Escanaba!*' Is that one of yours, Miss Sherrill; is that one of yours and my — Mr. Corvet's?"

She shook her head, sorry that she had to say no. "Shall we go on now?"

The bridge was swinging shut again; the long line of motor cars, which had accumulated from the boulevard from the city, began slowly to move. Constance turned the car down the narrow street, fronted by warehouses which Alan had passed the morning before, to Michigan Avenue, with the park and harbor to the left. When she glanced now at Alan, she saw that a reaction of depression had followed excitement at seeing the steamer pass close by.

Memory, if he could call it that, had given him

feeling for ships and for the lake; a single word — *Miwaka* — a childish rhyme and story, which he might have heard repeated and have asked for a hundred times in babyhood. But these recollections were only what those of a three-years' child might have been. Not only did they refuse to connect themselves with anything else, but by the very finality of their isolation; they warned him that they — and perhaps a few more vague memories of similar sort — were all that recollection ever would give him. He caught himself together and turned his thoughts to the approaching visit to Sherrill — and his father's offices.

Observing the towering buildings to his right, he was able to identify some of the more prominent structures, familiar from photographs of the city. Constance drove swiftly a few blocks down this boulevard; then, with a sudden, "Here we are!" she shot the car to the curb and stopped. She led Alan into one of the tallest and best-looking of the buildings, where they took an elevator placarded "Express" to the fifteenth floor.

On several of the doors opening upon the wide marble hall where the elevator left them, Alan saw the names, "Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman." As they passed, without entering, one of these doors which stood propped open, and he looked in, he got his first realization of the comparatively small land accommodations which a great business conducted upon the water requires. What he saw within was only one large room, with hardly more than a dozen, certainly not a score of desks in it; nearly all the desks were closed, and there were not more than three or four people in the room, and these apparently stenographers. Doors of several smaller offices, opening upon the larger room, bore

names, among which he saw "Mr. Corvet" and "Mr. Spearman."

"It won't look like that a month from now," Constance said, catching his expression. "Just now, you know, the straits and all the northern lakes are locked fast with ice. There's nothing going on now except the winter traffic on Lake Michigan and, to a much smaller extent, on Ontario and Erie; we have an interest in some winter boats, but we don't operate them from here. Next month we will be busy fitting out, and the month after that all the ships we have will be upon the water."

She led the way on past to a door farther down the corridor, which bore merely the name, "Lawrence Sherrill"; evidently Sherrill, who had interests aside from the shipping business, had offices connected with but not actually a part of the offices of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman. A girl was on guard on the other side of the door; she recognized Constance Sherrill at once and, saying that Mr. Sherrill had been awaiting Mr. Conrad, she opened an inner door and led Alan into a large, many-windowed room, where Sherrill was sitting alone before a table-desk. He arose, a moment after the door opened, and spoke a word to his daughter, who had followed Alan and the girl to the door, but who had halted there. Constance withdrew, and the girl from the outer office also went away, closing the door behind her. Sherrill pulled the "visitor's chair" rather close to his desk and to his own big leather chair before asking Alan to seat himself.

"You wanted to tell me, or ask me, something last night, my daughter has told me," Sherrill said cordially. "I'm sorry I wasn't home when you came back."

"I wanted to ask you, Mr. Sherrill," Alan said, "about those facts in regard to Mr. Corvet which you mentioned to me yesterday but did not explain. You said it would not aid me to know them; but I found certain things in Mr. Corvet's house last night which made me want to know, if I could, everything you could tell me."

Sherrill opened a drawer and took out a large, plain envelope.

"I did not tell you about these yesterday, Alan," he said, "not only because I had not decided how to act in regard to these matters, but because I had not said anything to Mr. Spearman about them previously, because I expected to get some additional information from you. After seeing you, I was obliged to wait for Spearman to get back to town. The circumstances are such that I felt myself obliged to talk them over first with him; I have done that this morning; so I was going to send for you, if you had not come down."

Sherrill thought a minute, still holding the envelope closed in his hand.

"On the day after your father disappeared," he went on, "but before I knew he was gone — or before any one except my daughter felt any alarm about him — I received a short note from him. I will show it to you later, if you wish; its exact wording, however, is unimportant. It had been mailed very late the night before and apparently at the mail box near his house or at least, by the postmark, somewhere in the neighborhood; and for that reason had not been taken up before the morning collection and did not reach the office until I had been here and gone away again about eleven o'clock. I did not get it, therefore, until after

lunch. The note was agitated, almost incoherent. It told me he had sent for you — Alan Conrad, of Blue Rapids, Kansas — but spoke of you as though you were some one I ought to have known about, and commended you to my care. The remainder of it was merely an agitated, almost indecipherable farewell to me. When I opened the envelope, a key had fallen out. The note made no reference to the key, but comparing it with one I had in my pocket, I saw that it appeared to be a key to a safety deposit box in the vaults of a company where we both had boxes.

"The note, taken in connection with my daughter's alarm about him, made it so plain that something serious had happened to Corvet, that my first thought was merely for him. Corvet was not a man with whom one could readily connect the thought of suicide; but, Alan, that was the idea I had. I hurried at once to his house, but the bell was not answered, and I could not get in. His servant, Wassaquam, has very few friends, and the few times he has been away from home of recent years have been when he visited an acquaintance of his — the head porter in a South Side hotel. I went to the telephone in the house next door and called the hotel and found Wassaquam there. I asked Wassaquam about the letter to 'Alan Conrad,' and Wassaquam said Corvet had given it to him to post early in the evening. Several hours later, Corvet had sent him out to wait at the mail box for the mail collector to get the letter back. Wassaquam went out to the mail box, and Corvet came out there too, almost at once. The mail collector, when he came, told them, of course, that he could not return the letter; but Corvet himself had taken the letters and looked them through. Corvet

seemed very much excited when he discovered the letter was not there; and when the mail man remembered that he had been late on his previous trip and so must have taken up the letter almost at once after it was mailed, Corvet's excitement increased on learning that it was already probably on the train on its way west. He controlled himself later enough at least to reassure Wassaquam; for an hour or so after, when Corvet sent Wassaquam away from the house, Wassaquam had gone without feeling any anxiety about him.

"I told Wassaquam over the telephone only that something was wrong, and hurried to my own home to get the key, which I had, to the Corvet house; but when I came back and let myself into the house, I found it empty and with no sign of anything having happened.

"The next morning, Alan, I went to the safe deposit vaults as soon as they were open. I presented the numbered key and was told that it belonged to a box rented by Corvet, and that Corvet had arranged about three days before for me to have access to the box if I presented the key. I had only to sign my name in their book and open the box. In it, Alan, I found the pictures of you which I showed you yesterday and the very strange communications that I am going to show you now."

Sherrill opened the long envelope from which several thin, folded papers fell. He picked up the largest of these, which consisted of several sheets fastened together with a clip, and handed it to Alan without comment. Alan, as he looked at it and turned the pages, saw that it contained two columns of typewriting carried from page to page after the manner of an account.

The column to the left was an inventory of property

and profits and income by months and years, and the one to the right was a list of losses and expenditures. Beginning at an indefinite day or month in the year 1895, there was set down in a lump sum what was indicated as the total of Benjamin Corvet's holdings at that time. To this, in sometimes undated items, the increase had been added. In the opposite column, beginning apparently from the same date in 1895, were the missing man's expenditures. The painstaking exactness of these left no doubt of their correctness; they included items for natural depreciation of perishable properties and, evidently, had been worked over very recently. Upon the last sheet, the second column had been deducted from the first, and an apparently purely arbitrary sum of two hundred thousand dollars had been taken away. From the remainder there had been taken away approximately one hundred and fifty thousand dollars more.

Alan having ascertained that the papers contained only this account, looked up questioningly to Sherrill; but Sherrill, without speaking, merely handed him the second of the papers. . . . This, Alan saw, had evidently been folded to fit a smaller envelope. Alan unfolded it and saw that it was a letter written in the same hand which had written the summons he had received in Blue Rapids and had made the entries in the little memorandum book of the remittances that had been sent to John Welton.

It began simply:

Lawrence —

This will come to you in the event that I am not able to carry out the plan upon which I am now,

at last, determined. You will find with this a list of my possessions which, except for two hundred thousand dollars settled upon my wife which was hers absolutely to dispose of as she desired and a further sum of approximately one hundred and fifty thousand dollars presented in memory of her to the Hospital Service in France, have been transferred to you without legal reservation.

You will find deeds for all real estate executed and complete except for recording of the transfer at the county office; bonds, certificates, and other documents representing my ownership of properties, together with signed forms for their legal transfer to you, are in this box. These properties, in their entirety, I give to you in trust to hold for the young man now known as Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids, Kansas, to deliver any part or all over to him or to continue to hold it all in trust for him as you shall consider to be to his greatest advantage.

This for the reasons which I shall have told to you or him — I cannot know which one of you now, nor do I know how I shall tell it. But when you learn, Lawrence, think as well of me as you can and help him to be charitable to me.

With the greatest affection,

BENJAMIN CORVET.

Alan, as he finished reading, looked up to Sherrill, bewildered and dazed.

"What does it mean, Mr. Sherrill? — Does it mean that he has gone away and left everything he had — everything to me?"

"The properties listed here," Sherrill touched the pages Alan first had looked at, "are in the box at the vault with the executed forms of their transfer to me.

If Mr. Corvet does not return, and I do not receive any other instructions, I shall take over his estate as he has instructed for your advantage."

"And, Mr. Sherrill, he didn't tell you why? This is all you know?"

"Yes; you have everything now. The fact that he did not give his reasons for this, either to you or me, made me think at first that he might have made his plan known to some one else, and that he had been opposed — to the extent even of violence done upon him — to prevent his carrying it out. But the more I have considered this, the less likely it has seemed to me. Whatever had happened to Corvet that had so much disturbed and excited him lately, seems rather to have precipitated his plan than deterred him in it. He may have determined after he had written this that his actions and the plain indication of his relationship to you, gave all the explanation he wanted to make. All we can do, Alan, is to search for him in every way we can. There will be others searching for him too now; for information of his disappearance has got out. There have been reporters at the office this morning making inquiries, and his disappearance will be in the afternoon papers."

Sherrill put the papers back in their envelope, and the envelope back into the drawer, which he relocked.

"I went over all this with Mr. Spearman this morning," he said. "He is as much at a loss to explain it as I am."

He was silent for a few moments.

"The transfer of Mr. Corvet's properties to me for you," he said suddenly, "includes, as you have seen, Corvet's interest in the firm of 'Corvet, Sherrill and

Spearman.' I went very carefully through the deeds and transfers in the deposit box, and it was plain that, while he had taken great care with the forms of transfer for all the properties, he had taken particular pains with whatever related to his holdings in this company and to his shipping interests. If I make over the properties to you, Alan, I shall begin with those; for it seems to me that your father was particularly anxious that you should take a personal as well as a financial place among the men who control the traffic of the lakes. I have told Spearman that this is my intention. He has not been able to see it my way as yet; but he may change his views, I think, after meeting you."

Sherrill got up. Alan arose a little unsteadily. The list of properties he had read and the letter and Sherrill's statement portended so much that its meaning could not all come to him at once. He followed Sherrill through a short private corridor, flanked with files lettered "Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman," into the large room he had seen when he came in with Constance. They crossed this, and Sherrill, without knocking, opened the door of the office marked, "Mr. Spearman." Alan, looking on past Sherrill as the door opened, saw that there were some half dozen men in the room, smoking and talking. They were big men mostly, ruddy-skinned and weather-beaten in look, and he judged from their appearance, and from the pile of their hats and coats upon a chair, that they were officers of the company's ships, idle while the ships were laid up, but reporting now at the offices and receiving instructions as the time for fitting out approached.

His gaze went swiftly on past these men to the one

who, half seated on the top of the flat desk, had been talking to them; and his pulse closed upon his heart with a shock; he started, choked with astonishment, then swiftly forced himself under control. For this was the man whom he had met and whom he had fought in Benjamin Corvet's house the night before — the big man surprised in his blasphemy of Corvet and of souls "in Hell" who, at sight of an apparition with a bullet hole above its eye, had cried out in his fright, "You got Ben! But you won't get me — damn you! Damn you!"

Alan's shoulders drew up slightly, and the muscles of his hands tightened, as Sherrill led him to this man. Sherrill put his hand on the man's shoulder; his other hand was still on Alan's arm.

"Henry," he said to the man, "this is Alan Conrad. Alan, I want you to know my partner, Mr. Spearman."

Spearman nodded an acknowledgment, but did not put out his hand; his eyes — steady, bold, watchful eyes — seemed measuring Alan attentively; and in return Alan, with his gaze, was measuring him.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. CORVET'S PARTNER

THE instant of meeting, when Alan recognized in Sherrill's partner the man with whom he had fought in Corvet's house, was one of swift readjustment of all his thought — adjustment to a situation of which he could not even have dreamed, and which left him breathless. But for Spearman, obviously, it was not that. Following his noncommittal nod of acknowledgment of Sherrill's introduction and his first steady scrutiny of Alan, the big, handsome man swung himself off from the desk on which he sat and leaned against it, facing them more directly.

"Oh, yes — Conrad," he said. His tone was hearty; in it Alan could recognize only so much of reserve as might be expected from Sherrill's partner who had taken an attitude of opposition. The shipmasters, looking on, could see, no doubt, not even that; except for the excitement which Alan himself could not conceal, it must appear to them only an ordinary introduction.

Alan fought sharply down the swift rush of his blood and the tightening of his muscles.

"I can say truly that I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Spearman," he managed.

There was no recognition of anything beyond the mere surface meaning of the words in Spearman's slow smile of acknowledgment, as he turned from Alan to Sherrill.

"I'm afraid you've taken rather a bad time, Lawrence."

"You're busy, you mean. This can wait, Henry, if what you're doing is immediate."

"I want some of these men to be back in Michigan to-night. Can't we get together later — this afternoon? You'll be about here this afternoon?" His manner was not casual; Alan could not think of any expression of that man as being casual; but this, he thought, came as near it as Spearman could come.

"I think I can be here this afternoon," Alan said.

"Would two-thirty suit you?"

"As well as any other time."

"Let's say two-thirty, then." Spearman turned and noted the hour almost solicitously among the scrawled appointments on his desk pad; straightening, after this act of dismissal, he walked with them to the door, his hand on Sherrill's shoulder.

"Circumstances have put us — Mr. Sherrill and myself — in a very difficult position, Conrad," he remarked. "We want much to be fair to all concerned —"

He did not finish the sentence, but halted at the door. Sherrill went out, and Alan followed him; exasperation — half outrage yet half admiration — at Spearman's bearing, held Alan speechless. The blood rushed hotly to his skin as the door closed behind them, his hands clenched, and he turned back to the closed door; then he checked himself and followed Sherrill, who, oblivious to Alan's excitement, led the way to the door which bore Corvet's name. He opened it, disclosing an empty room, somewhat larger than Spearman's and similar to it, except that it lacked the marks of constant use. It

was plain that, since Spearman had chosen to put off discussion of Alan's status, Sherrill did not know what next to do; he stood an instant in thought, then, contenting himself with inviting Alan to lunch, he excused himself to return to his office. When he had gone, closing the door behind him, Alan began to pace swiftly up and down the room.

What had just passed had left him still breathless; he felt bewildered. If every movement of Spearman's great, handsome body had not recalled to him their struggle of the night before — if, as Spearman's hand rested cordially on Sherrill's shoulder, Alan had not seemed to feel again that big hand at his throat — he would almost have been ready to believe that this was not the man whom he had fought. But he could not doubt that; he had recognized Spearman beyond question. And Spearman had recognized him — he was sure of that; he could not for an instant doubt it; Spearman had known it was Alan whom he had fought in Corvet's house even before Sherrill had brought them together. Was there not further proof of that in Spearman's subsequent manner toward him? For what was all this cordiality except defiance? Undoubtedly Spearman had acted just as he had to show how undisturbed he was, how indifferent he might be to any accusation Alan could make. Not having told Sherrill of the encounter in the house — not having told any one else — Alan could not tell it now, after Sherrill had informed him that Spearman opposed his accession to Corvet's estate; or, at least, he could not tell who the man was. In the face of Spearman's manner toward him to-day, Sherrill would not believe. If Spearman denied it — and his story of his return to town that

morning made it perfectly certain that he would deny it — it would be only Alan's word against Spearman's — the word of a stranger unknown to Sherrill except by Alan's own account of himself and the inferences from Corvet's acts. There could be no risk to Spearman in that; he had nothing to fear if Alan blurted an accusation against him. Spearman, perhaps, even wanted him to do that — hoped he would do it. Nothing could more discredit Alan than such an unsustainable accusation against the partner who was opposing Alan's taking his father's place. For it had been plain that Spearman dominated Sherrill, and that Sherrill felt confidence in and admiration toward him.

Alan grew hot with the realization that, in the interview just past, Spearman had also dominated him. He had been unable to find anything adequate to do, anything adequate to answer, in opposition to this man more than fifteen years older than himself and having a lifelong experience in dealing with all kinds of men. He would not yield to Spearman like that again; it was the bewilderment of his recognition of Spearman that had made him do it. Alan stopped his pacing and flung himself down in the leather desk-chair which had been Corvet's. He could hear, at intervals, Spearman's heavy, genial voice addressing the ship men in his office; its tones — half of comradeship, half of command — told only too plainly his dominance over those men also. He heard Spearman's office door open and some of the men go out; after a time it opened again, and the rest went out. He heard Spearman's voice in the outer office, then heard it again as Spearman returned alone into his private office.

There was a telephone upon Corvet's desk which un-

doubtedly connected with the switchboard in the general office. Alan picked up the receiver and asked for "Mr. Spearman." At once the hearty voice answered, "Yes."

"This is Conrad."

"I thought I told you I was busy, Conrad!" The 'phone clicked as Spearman hung up the receiver.

The quality of the voice at the other end of the wire had altered; it had become suddenly again the harsh voice of the man who had called down curses upon "Ben" and on men "in Hell" in Corvet's library.

Alan sat back in his chair, smiling a little. It had not been for him, then — that pretense of an almost mocking cordiality; Spearman was not trying to deceive or to influence Alan by that. It had been merely for Sherrill's benefit; or, rather, it had been because, in Sherrill's presence, this had been the most effective weapon against Alan which Spearman could employ. Spearman might, or might not, deny to Alan his identity with the man whom Alan had fought; as yet Alan did not know which Spearman would do; but, at least, between themselves there was to be no pretense about the antagonism, the opposition they felt toward one another.

Little prickling thrills of excitement were leaping through Alan, as he got up and moved about the room again. The room was on a corner, and there were two windows, one looking to the east over the white and blue expanse of the harbor and the lake; the other showing the roofs and chimneys, the towers and domes of Chicago, reaching away block after block, mile after mile to the south and west, till they dimmed and blurred in the brown haze of the sunlit smoke. Power and pos-

session — both far exceeding Alan's most extravagant dream — were promised him by those papers which Sherrill had shown him. When he had read down the list of those properties, he had had no more feeling that such things could be his than he had had at first that Corvet's house could be his — until he had heard the intruder moving in that house. And now it was the sense that another was going to make him fight for those properties that was bringing to him the realization of his new power. He "had" something on that man — on Spearman. He did not know what that thing was; no stretch of his thought, nothing that he knew about himself or others, could tell him; but, at sight of him, in the dark of Corvet's house, Spearman had cried out in horror, he had screamed at him the name of a sunken ship, and in terror had hurled his electric torch. It was true, Spearman's terror had not been at Alan Conrad; it had been because Spearman had mistaken him for some one else — for a ghost. But, after learning that Alan was not a ghost, Spearman's attitude had not very greatly changed; he had fought, he had been willing to kill rather than to be caught there.

Alan thought an instant; he would make sure he still "had" that something on Spearman and would learn how far it went. He took up the receiver and asked for Spearman again.

Again the voice answered —"Yes."

"I don't care whether you're busy," Alan said evenly. "I think you and I had better have a talk before we meet with Mr. Sherrill this afternoon. I am here in Mr. Corvet's office now and will be here for half an hour; then I'm going out."

Spearman made no reply but again hung up the receiver. Alan sat waiting, his watch upon the desk before him — tense, expectant, with flushes of hot and cold passing over him. Ten minutes passed; then twenty. The telephone under Corvet's desk buzzed.

"Mr. Spearman says he will give you five minutes now," the switchboard girl said.

Alan breathed deep with relief; Spearman had wanted to refuse to see him — but he had not refused; he had sent for him within the time Alan had appointed and after waiting until just before it expired.

Alan put his watch back into his pocket and, crossing to the other office, found Spearman alone. There was no pretense of courtesy now in Spearman's manner; he sat motionless at his desk, his bold eyes fixed on Alan intently. Alan closed the door behind him and advanced toward the desk.

"I thought we'd better have some explanation," he said, "about our meeting last night."

"Our meeting?" Spearman repeated; his eyes had narrowed watchfully.

"You told Mr. Sherrill that you were in Duluth and that you arrived home in Chicago only this morning. Of course you don't mean to stick to that story with me?"

"What are you talking about?" Spearman demanded.

"Of course, I know exactly where you were a part of last evening; and you know that I know. I only want to know what explanation you have to offer.

Spearman leaned forward. "Talk sense and talk it quick, if you have anything to say to me!"

"I haven't told Mr. Sherrill that I found you at

Corvet's house last night; but I don't want you to doubt for a minute that I know you — and about your damning of Benjamin Corvet and your cry about saving the *Miwaka!*"

A flash of blood came to Spearman's face; Alan, in his excitement, was sure of it; but there was just that flash, no more. He turned, while Spearman sat chewing his cigar and staring at him, and went out and partly closed the door. Then, suddenly, he reopened it, looked in, reclosed it sharply, and went on his way, shaking a little. For, as he looked back this second time at the dominant, determined, able man seated at his desk, what he had seen in Spearman's face was fear; fear of himself, of Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids — yet it was not fear of that sort which weakens or dismays; it was of that sort which, merely warning of danger close at hand, determines one to use every means within his power to save himself.

Alan, still trembling excitedly, crossed to Corvet's office to await Sherrill. It was not, he felt sure now, Alan Conrad that Spearman was opposing; it was not even the apparent successor to the controlling stock of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman. That Alan resembled some one — some one whose ghost had seemed to come to Spearman and might, perhaps, have come to Corvet — was only incidental to what was going on now; for in Alan's presence Spearman found a threat — an active, present threat against himself. Alan could not imagine what the nature of that threat could be. Was it because there was something still concealed in Corvet's house which Spearman feared Alan would find? Or was it connected only with that some one whom Alan resembled? Who was it Alan resembled? His

mother? In what had been told him, in all that he had been able to learn about himself, Alan had found no mention of his mother — no mention, indeed, of any woman. There had been mention, definite mention, of but one thing which seemed, no matter what form these new experiences of his took, to connect himself with all of them — mention of a ship, a lost ship — the *Miwaka.* That name had stirred Alan, when he first heard it, with the first feeling he had been able to get of any possible connection between himself and these people here. Spoken by himself just now it had stirred, queerly stirred, Spearman. What was it, then, that he — Alan — had to do with the *Miwaka?* Spearman might — must have had something to do with it. So must Corvet. But himself — he had been not yet three years old when the *Miwaka* was lost! Beyond and above all other questions, what had Constance Sherrill to do with it?

She had continued to believe that Corvet's disappearance was related in some way to herself. Alan would rather trust her intuition as to this than trust to Sherrill's contrary opinion. Yet she, certainly, could have had no direct connection with a ship lost about the time she was born and before her father had allied himself with the firm of Corvet and Spearman. In the misty warp and woof of these events, Alan could find as yet nothing which could have involved her. But he realized that he was thinking about her even more than he was thinking about Spearman — more, at that moment, even than about the mystery which surrounded himself.

Constance Sherrill, as she went about her shopping at Field's, was feeling the strangeness of the experience

she had shared that morning with Alan when she had completed for him the Indian creation legend and had repeated the ship rhymes of his boyhood; but her more active thought was about Henry Spearman, for she had a luncheon engagement with him at one o'clock. He liked one always to be prompt at appointments; he either did not keep an engagement at all, or he was on the minute, neither early nor late, except for some very unusual circumstance. Constance could never achieve such accurate punctuality, so several minutes before the hour she went to the agreed corner of the silverware department.

She absorbed herself intently with the selection of her purchase as one o'clock approached. She was sure that, after his three days' absence, he would be a moment early rather than late; but after selecting what she wanted, she monopolized twelve minutes more of the salesman's time in showing her what she had no intention of purchasing, before she picked out Henry's vigorous step from the confusion of ordinary footfalls in the aisle behind her. Though she had determined, a few moments before, to punish him a little, she turned quickly.

"Sorry I'm late, Connie." That meant that it was no ordinary business matter that had detained him; but there was nothing else noticeably unusual in his tone.

"It's certainly your turn to be the tardy one," she admitted.

"I'd never take my turn if I could help it — particularly just after being away; you know that."

She turned carelessly to the clerk. "I'll take that too,"— she indicated the trinket which she had exam-

ined last. "Send it, please. I've finished here now, Henry."

"I thought you didn't like that sort of thing." His glance had gone to the bit of frippery in the clerk's hand.

"I don't," she confessed.

"Then don't buy it. She doesn't want that; don't send it," he directed the salesman.

"Very well, sir."

Henry touched her arm and turned her away. She flushed a little, but she was not displeased. Any of the other men whom she knew would have wasted twenty dollars, as lightly as herself, rather than confess, "I really didn't want anything more; I just didn't want to be seen waiting." They would not have admitted — those other men — that such a sum made the slightest difference to her or, by inference, to them; but Henry was always willing to admit that there had been a time when money meant much to him, and he gained respect thereby.

The tea room of such a department store as Field's offers to young people opportunities for dining together without furnishing reason for even innocently connecting their names too intimately, if a girl is not seen there with the same man too often. There is something essentially casual and unpremeditated about it — as though the man and the girl, both shopping and both hungry, had just happened to meet and go to lunch together. As Constance recently had drawn closer to Henry Spearman in her thought, and particularly since she had been seriously considering marrying him, she had clung deliberately to this unplanned appearance about their meetings. She found something thrilling

in this casualness too. Spearman's bigness, which attracted eyes to him always in a crowd, was merely the first and most obvious of the things which kept attention on him; there were few women who, having caught sight of the big, handsome, decisive, carefully groomed man, could look away at once. If Constance suspected that, ten years before, it might have been the eyes of shop-girls that followed Spearman with the greatest interest, she was certain no one could find anything flashy about him now. What he compelled now was admiration and respect alike for his good looks and his appearance of personal achievement — a tribute very different from the tolerance granted those boys brought up as irresponsible inheritors of privilege like herself.

As they reached the restaurant and passed between the rows of tables, women looked up at him; oblivious, apparently, to their gaze, he chose a table a little removed from the others, where servants hurried to take his order, recognizing one whose time was of importance. She glanced across at him, when she had settled herself, and the first little trivialities of their being together were over.

"I took a visitor down to your office this morning," she said.

"Yes," he answered.

Constance was aware that it was only formally that she had taken Alan Conrad down to confer with her father; since Henry was there, she knew her father would not act without his agreement, and that whatever disposition had been made regarding Alan had been made by him. She wondered what that disposition had been.

"Did you like him, Henry?"

"Like him?" She would have thought that the reply was merely inattentive; but Henry was never merely that.

"I hoped you would."

He did not answer at once. The waitress brought their order, and he served her; then, as the waitress moved away, he looked across at Constance with a long scrutiny.

"You hoped I would!" he repeated, with his slow smile. "Why?"

"He seemed to be in a difficult position and to be bearing himself well; and mother was horrid to him."

"How was she horrid?"

"About the one thing which, least of all, could be called his fault — about his relationship to — to Mr. Corvet. But he stood up to her!"

The lids drew down a little upon Spearman's eyes as he gazed at her.

"You've seen a good deal of him, yesterday and to-day, your father tells me," he observed.

"Yes." As she ate, she talked, telling him about her first meeting with Alan and about their conversation of the morning and the queer awakening in him of those half memories which seemed to connect him in some way with the lakes. She felt herself flushing now and then with feeling, and once she surprised herself by finding her eyes wet when she had finished telling Henry about showing Alan the picture of his father. Henry listened intently, eating slowly. When she stopped, he appeared to be considering something.

"That's all he told you about himself?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"And all you told him?"

"He asked me some things about the lakes and about the *Miwaka*, which was lost so long ago — he said he'd found some reference to that and wanted to know whether it was a ship. I told him about it and about the Drum which made people think that the crew were not all lost."

"About the Drum! What made you speak of that?" The irritation in his tone startled her and she looked quickly up at him. "I mean," he offered, "why did you drag in a crazy superstition like that? You don't believe in the Drum, Connie!"

"It would be so interesting if some one really had been saved and if the Drum had told the truth, that sometimes I think I'd like to believe in it. Wouldn't you, Henry?"

"No," he said abruptly. "No!" Then quickly:

"It's plain enough you like him," he remarked.

She reflected seriously. "Yes, I do; though I hadn't thought of it just that way, because I was thinking most about the position he was in and about — Mr. Corvet. But I do like him."

"So do I," Spearman said with a seeming heartiness that pleased her. He broke a piece of bread upon the tablecloth and his big, well-shaped fingers began to roll it into little balls. "At least I should like him, Connie, if I had the sort of privilege you have to think whether I liked or disliked him. I've had to consider him from another point of view — whether I could trust him or must distrust him."

"Distrust?" Constance bent toward him impulsively in her surprise. "Distrust him? In relation to what? Why?"

"In relation to Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman, Connie — the company that involves your interests and your father's and mine and the interests of many other people — small stockholders who have no influence in its management, and whose interests I have to look after for them. A good many of them, you know, are our own men — our old skippers and mates and families of men who have died in our service and who left their savings in stock in our ships."

"I don't understand, Henry."

"I've had to think of Conrad this morning in the same way as I've had to think of Ben Corvet of recent years — as a threat against the interests of those people."

Her color rose, and her pulse quickened. Henry never had talked to her, except in the merest commonplaces, about his relations with Uncle Benny; it was a matter in which, she had recognized, they had been opposed; and since the quarrels between the old friend whom she had loved from childhood and him, who wished to become now more than a mere friend to her, had grown more violent, she had purposely avoided mentioning Uncle Benny to Henry, and he, quite as consciously, had avoided mentioning Mr. Corvet to her.

"I've known for a good many years." Spearman said reluctantly, "that Ben Corvet's brain was seriously affected. He recognized that himself even earlier, and admitted it to himself when he took me off my ship to take charge of the company. I might have gone with other people then, or it wouldn't have been very long before I could have started in as a ship owner myself; but, in view of his condition, Ben made me promises that offered me most. Afterwards his

malady progressed so that he couldn't know himself to be untrustworthy; his judgment was impaired, and he planned and would have tried to carry out many things which would have been disastrous for the company. I had to fight him — for the company's sake and for my own sake and that of the others, whose interests were at stake. Your father came to see that what I was doing was for the company's good and has learned to trust me. But you — you couldn't see that quite so directly, of course, and you thought I didn't — like Ben, that there was some lack in me which made me fail to appreciate him."

"No; not that," Constance denied quickly. "Not that, Henry."

"What was it then, Connie? You thought me ungrateful to him? I realized that I owed a great deal to him; but the only way I could pay that debt was to do exactly what I did — oppose him and seem to push into his place and be an ingrate; for, because I did that, Ben's been a respected and honored man in this town all these last years, which he couldn't have remained if I'd let him have his way, or if I told others why I had to do what I did. I didn't care what others thought about me; but I did care what you thought; yet if you couldn't see what I was up against because of your affection for him, why — that was all right too."

"No, it wasn't all right," she denied almost fiercely, the flush flooding her cheeks; a throbbing was in her throat which, for an instant, stopped her. "You should have told me, Henry; or — I should have been able to see."

"I couldn't tell you — dear," he said the last word

very distinctly, but so low that she could scarcely hear. "I couldn't tell you now — if Ben hadn't gone away as he has and this other fellow come. I couldn't tell you when you wanted to keep caring so much for your Uncle Benny, and he was trying to hurt me with you."

She bent toward him, her lips parted; but now she did not speak. She never had really known Henry until this moment, she felt; she had thought of him always as strong, almost brutal, fighting down fiercely, mercilessly, his opponents and welcoming contest for the joy of overwhelming others by his own decisive strength and power. And she had been almost ready to marry that man for his strength and dominance from those qualities; and now she knew that he was merciful too — indeed, more than merciful. In the very contest where she had thought of him as most selfish and regardless of another, she had most completely misapprehended.

"I ought to have seen!" she rebuked herself to him. "Surely, I should have seen that was it!" Her hand, in the reproach of her feeling, reached toward him across the table; he caught it and held it in his large, strong hand which, in its touch, was very tender too. She had never allowed any such demonstration as this before; but now she let her hand remain in his.

"How could you see?" he defended her. "He never showed to you the side he showed to me and — in these last years, anyway — never to me the side he showed to you. But after what has happened this week, you can understand now; and you can see why I have to distrust the young fellow who's come to claim Ben Covert's place."

"Claim!" Constance repeated; she drew her hand

quietly away from his now. "Why, Henry, I did not know he claimed anything; he didn't even know when he came here —"

"He seems, like Ben Corvet," Henry said slowly, "to have the characteristic of showing one side to you, another to me, Connie. With you, of course, he claimed nothing; but at the office — Your father showed him this morning the instruments of transfer that Ben seems to have left conveying to him all Ben had — his other properties and his interest in Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman. I very naturally objected to the execution of those transfers, without considerable examination, in view of Corvet's mental condition and of the fact that they put the controlling stock of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman in the hands of a youth no one ever had heard of — and one who, by his own story, never had seen a ship until yesterday. And when I didn't dismiss my business with a dozen men this morning to take him into the company, he claimed occasion to see me alone to threaten me."

"Threaten you, Henry? How? With what?"

"I couldn't quite make out myself, but that was his tone; he demanded an 'explanation' of exactly what, he didn't make clear. He has been given by Ben, apparently, the technical control of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman. His idea, if I oppose him, evidently is to turn me out and take the management himself."

Constance leaned back, confused. "He — Alan Conrad?" she questioned. "He can't have done that, Henry! Oh, he can't have meant that!"

"Maybe he didn't; I said I couldn't make out what he did mean," Spearman said. "Things have come upon him with rather a rush, of course; and you

couldn't expect a country boy to get so many things straight. He's acting, I suppose, only in the way one might expect a boy to act who had been brought up in poverty on a Kansas prairie and was suddenly handed the possible possession of a good many millions of dollars. It's better to believe that he's only lost his head. I haven't had opportunity to tell your father these things yet; but I wanted you to understand why Conrad will hardly consider me a friend."

"I'll understand you now, Henry," she promised.

He gazed at her and started to speak; then, as though postponing it on account of the place, he glanced around and took out his watch.

"You must go back?" she asked.

"No; I'm not going back to the office this afternoon, Connie; but I must call up your father."

He excused himself and went into the nearest telephone booth.

CHAPTER IX

VIOLENCE

AT half-past three, Alan left the office. Sherrill had told him an hour earlier that Spearman had telephoned he would not be able to get back for a conference that afternoon; and Alan was certain now that in Spearman's absence Sherrill would do nothing further with respect to his affairs.

He halted on the ground floor of the office building and bought copies of each of the afternoon papers. A line completely across the pink page of one announced "Millionaire Ship Owner Missing!" The other three papers, printed at the same hour, did not display the story prominently; and even the one which did failed to make it the most conspicuous sensation. A line of larger and blacker type told of a change in the battle line on the west front and, where the margin might have been, was the bulletin of some sensation in a local divorce suit. Alan was some time in finding the small print which went with the millionaire ship owner heading; and when he found it, he discovered that most of the space was devoted to the description of Corvet's share in the development of shipping on the lakes and the peculiarity of his past life instead of any definite announcement concerning his fate.

The other papers printed almost identical items under small head-type at the bottom of their first

pages; these items stated that Benjamin Corvet, the senior but inactive partner of the great shipping firm of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman, whose "disappearance" had been made the subject of sensational rumor, "is believed by his partner, Mr. Henry Spearman, to have simply gone away for a rest," and that no anxiety was felt concerning him. Alan found no mention of himself nor any of the circumstances connected with Corvet's disappearance of which Sherrill had told him.

Alan threw the papers away. There was a car line two blocks west, Sherrill had said, which would take him within a short distance of the house on Astor Street; but that neighborhood of fashion where the Sherrills — and now Alan himself — lived was less than a half hour's walk from the down-town district and, in the present turmoil of his thoughts, he wanted to be moving.

Spearman, he reflected as he walked north along the avenue, plainly had dictated the paragraphs he just had read in the papers. Sherrill, Alan knew, had desired to keep the circumstances regarding Corvet from becoming public; and without Sherrill's agreement concealment would have been impossible, but it was Spearman who had checked the suspicions of outsiders and determined what they must believe; and, by so doing, he had made it impossible for Alan to enroll aid from the newspapers or the police. Alan did not know whether he might have found it expedient to seek publicity; but now he had not a single proof of anything he could tell. For Sherrill, naturally, had retained the papers Corvet had left. Alan could not hope to obtain credence from Sherrill and, without Sherrill's aid, he could not obtain credence from any one else.

Was there, then, no one whom Alan could tell of his encounter with Spearman in Corvet's house, with probability of receiving belief? Alan had not been thinking directly of Constance Sherrill, as he walked swiftly north to the Drive; but she was, in a way, present in all his thoughts. She had shown interest in him, or at least in the position he was in, and sympathy; he had even begun to tell her about these things when he had spoken to her of some event in Corvet's house which had given him the name "*Miwaka*," and he had asked her if it was a ship. And there could be no possible consequent peril to her in telling her; the peril, if there was any, would be only to himself.

His step quickened. As he approached the Sherrill house, he saw standing at the curb an open roadster with a liveried chauffeur; he had seen that roadster, he recognized with a little start, in front of the office building that morning when Constance had taken him down-town. He turned into the walk and rang the bell.

The servant who opened the door knew him and seemed to accept his right of entry to the house, for he drew back for Alan to enter. Alan went into the hall and waited for the servant to follow. "Is Miss Sherrill in?" he asked.

"I'll see, sir." The man disappeared. Alan, waiting, did not hear Constance's voice in reply to the announcement of the servant, but Spearman's vigorous tones. The servant returned. "Miss Sherrill will see you in a minute, sir."

Through the wide doorway to the drawing-room, Alan could see the smaller, portièred entrance to the room beyond — Sherrill's study. The curtains parted,

and Constance and Spearman came into this inner doorway; they stood an instant there in talk. As Constance started away, Spearman suddenly drew her back to him and kissed her. Alan's shoulders spontaneously jerked back, and his hands clenched; he did not look away and, as she approached, she became aware that he had seen.

She came to him, very quiet and very flushed; then she was quite pale as she asked him, "You wanted me?"

He was white as she, and could not speak at once. "You told me last night, Miss Sherrill," he said, "that the last thing that Mr. Corvet did — the last that you know of — was to warn you against one of your friends. Who was that?"

She flushed uneasily. "You mustn't attach any importance to that; I didn't mean you to. There was no reason for what Mr. Corvet said, except in Mr. Corvet's own mind. He had a quite unreasonable animosity —"

"Against Mr. Spearman, you mean."

She did not answer.

"His animosity was against Mr. Spearman, Miss Sherrill, wasn't it? That is the only animosity of Mr. Corvet's that any one has told me about."

"Yes."

"It was against Mr. Spearman that he warned you, then?"

"Yes."

"Thank you." He turned and, not waiting for the man, let himself out. He should have known it when he had seen that Spearman, after announcing himself as unable to get back to the office, was with Constance.

He went swiftly around the block to his own house and let himself in at the front door with his key. The house was warm; a shaded lamp on the table in the larger library was lighted, a fire was burning in the open grate, and the rooms had been swept and dusted. The Indian came into the hall to take his coat and hat.

"Dinner is at seven," Wassaquam announced. "You want some change about that?"

"No; seven is all right."

Alan went up-stairs to the room next to Corvet's which he had appropriated for his own use the night before, and found it now prepared for his occupancy. His suitcase, unpacked, had been put away in the closet; the clothing it had contained had been put in the dresser drawers, and the toilet articles arranged upon the top of the dresser and in the cabinet of the little connecting bath. So, clearly, Wassaquam had accepted him as an occupant of the house, though upon what status Alan could not guess. He had spoken of Wassaquam to Constance as his servant; but Wassaquam was not that; he was Corvet's servant — faithful and devoted to Corvet, Constance had said — and Alan could not think of Wassaquam as the sort of servant that "went with the house." The Indian's manner toward himself had been noncommittal, even stolid.

When Alan came down again to the first floor, Wassaquam was nowhere about, but he heard sounds in the service rooms on the basement floor. He went part way down the service stairs and saw the Indian in the kitchen, preparing dinner. Wassaquam had not heard his approach, and Alan stood an instant watching the Indian's tall, thin figure and the quick movements of his disproportionately small, well-shaped hands, almost

like a woman's; then he scuffed his foot upon the stair, and Wassaquam turned swiftly about.

"Anybody been here to-day, Judah?" Alan asked.

"No, Alan. I called tradesmen; they came. There were young men from the newspapers."

"They came here, did they? Then why did you say no one came?"

"I did not let them in."

"What did you tell them?"

"Nothing."

"Why not?"

"Henry telephoned I was to tell them nothing."

"You mean Henry Spearman?"

"Yes."

"Do you take orders from him, Judah?"

"I took that order, Alan."

Alan hesitated. "You've been here in the house all day?"

"Yes, Alan."

Alan went back to the first floor and into the smaller library. The room was dark with the early winter dusk, and he switched on the light; then he knelt and pulled out one of the drawers he had seen Spearman searching through the night before, and carefully examined the papers in it one by one, but found them only ordinary papers. He pulled the drawer completely out and sounded the wall behind it and the partitions on both sides but they appeared solid. He put the drawer back in and went on to examine the next one, and, after that, the others. The clocks in the house had been wound, for presently the clock in the library struck six, and another in the hall chimed slowly. An hour later, when the clocks chimed again,

Alan looked up and saw Wassaquam's small black eyes, deep set in their large eye sockets, fixed on him intently through the door. How long the Indian had been there, Alan could not guess; he had not heard his step.

"What are you looking for, Alan?" the Indian asked.

Alan reflected a moment. "Mr. Sherrill thought that Mr. Corvet might have left a record of some sort here for me, Judah. Do you know of anything like that?"

"No. That is what you are looking for?"

"Yes. Do you know of any place where Mr. Corvet would have been likely to put away anything like that?"

"Ben put papers in all these drawers; he put them up-stairs, too — where you have seen."

"Nowhere else, Judah?"

"If he put things anywhere else, Alan, I have not seen. Dinner is served, Alan."

Alan went to the lavatory on the first floor and washed the dust from his hands and face; then he went into the dining-room. A place had been set at the dining table around the corner from the place where, as the worn rug showed, the lonely occupant of the house had been accustomed to sit. Benjamin Corvet's armchair, with its worn leather back, had been left against the wall; so had another unworn armchair which Alan understood must have been Mrs. Corvet's; and an armless chair had been set for Alan between their places. Wassaquam, having served the dinner, took his place behind Alan's chair, ready to pass him what he needed; but the Indian's silent, watchful pres-

ence there behind him where he could not see his face, disturbed Alan, and he twisted himself about to look at him.

"Would you mind, Judah," he inquired, "if I asked you to stand over there instead of where you are?"

The Indian, without answering, moved around to the other side of the table, where he stood facing Alan.

"You're a Chippewa, aren't you, Judah?" Alan asked.

"Yes."

"Your people live at the other end of the lake, don't they?"

"Yes, Alan."

"Have you ever heard of the Indian Drum they talk about up there, that they say sounds when a ship goes down on the lake?"

The Indian's eyes sparkled excitedly. "Yes," he said.

"Do you believe in it?"

"Not just believe; I know. That is old Indian country up there, Alan — L'arbre Croche — Cross Village — Middle Village. A big town of Ottawas was there in old days; Pottawatomies too, and Chippewas. Indians now are all Christians, Catholics, and Methodists who hold camp meetings and speak beautifully. But some things of the old days are left. The Drum is like that. Everybody knows that it sounds for those who die on the lake."

"How do they know, Judah? How do you yourself know?"

"I have heard it. It sounded for my father."

"How was that?"

"Like this. My father sold some bullocks to a man

on Beaver Island. The man kept store on Beaver Island, Alan. No Indian liked him. He would not hand anything to an Indian or wrap anything in paper for an Indian. Say it was like this: An Indian comes in to buy salt pork. First the man would get the money. Then, Alan, he would take his hook and pull the pork up out of the barrel and throw it on the dirty floor for the Indian to pick up. He said Indians must take their food off of the floor — like dogs.

"My father had to take the bullocks to the man, across to Beaver Island. He had a Mackinaw boat, very little, with a sail made brown by boiling it with tan bark, so that it would not wear out. At first the Indians did not know who the bullocks were for, so they helped him. He tied the legs of the bullocks, the front legs and the back legs, then all four legs together, and the Indians helped him put them in the boat. When they found out the bullocks were for the man on Beaver Island, the Indians would not help him any longer. He had to take them across alone. Besides, it was bad weather, the beginning of a storm.

"He went away, and my mother went to pick berries — I was small then. Pretty soon I saw my mother coming back. She had no berries, and her hair was hanging down, and she was wailing. She took me in her arms and said my father was dead. Other Indians came around and asked her how she knew, and she said she had heard the Drum. The Indians went out to listen."

"Did you go?"

"Yes; I went."

"How old were you, Judah"

"Five years."

"That was the time you heard it?"

"Yes; it would beat once, then there would be silence; then it would beat again. It frightened us to hear it. The Indians would scream and beat their bodies with their hands when the sound came. We listened until night; there was a storm all the time growing greater in the dark, but no rain. The Drum would beat once; then nothing; then it would beat again once — never two or more times. So we knew it was for my father. It is supposed the feet of the bullocks came untied, and the bullocks tipped the boat over. They found near the island the body of one of the bullocks floating in the water, and its feet were untied. My father's body was on the beach near there."

"Did you ever hear of a ship called the *Miwaka*, Judah?"

"That was long ago," the Indian answered.

"They say that the Drum beat wrong when the *Miwaka* went down — that it was one beat short of the right number."

"That was long ago," Wassaquam merely repeated.

"Did Mr. Corvet ever speak to you about the *Miwaka?*"

"No; he asked me once if I had ever heard the Drum. I told him."

Wassaquam removed the dinner and brought Alan a dessert. He returned to stand in the place across the table that Alan had assigned to him, and stood looking down at Alan, steadily and thoughtfully.

"Do I look like any one you ever saw before, Judah?" Alan inquired of him.

"No."

"Is that what you were thinking?"

"That is what I was thinking. Will coffee be served in the library, Alan?"

Alan crossed to the library and seated himself in the chair where his father had been accustomed to sit. Wassaquam brought him the single small cup of coffee, lit the spirit lamp on the smoking stand, and moved that over; then he went away. When he had finished his coffee, Alan went into the smaller connecting room and recommenced his examination of the drawers under the bookshelves. He could hear the Indian moving about his tasks, and twice Wassaquam came to the door of the room and looked in on him; but he did not offer to say anything, and Alan did not speak to him. At ten o'clock, Alan stopped his search and went back to the chair in the library. He dozed; for he awoke with a start and a feeling that some one had been bending over him, and gazed up into Wassaquam's face. The Indian had been scrutinizing him with intent, anxious inquiry. He moved away, but Alan called him back.

"When Mr. Corvet disappeared, Judah, you went to look for him up at Manistique, where he was born — at least Mr. Sherrill said that was where you went. Why did you think you might find him there?" Alan asked.

"In the end, I think, a man maybe goes back to the place where he began. That's all, Alan."

"In the end! What do you mean by that? What do you think has become of Mr. Corvet?"

"I think now — Ben's dead."

"What makes you think that?"

"Nothing makes me think; I think it myself."

"I see. You mean you have no reason more than

others for thinking it; but that is what you believe."

"Yes." Wassaquam went away, and Alan heard him on the back stairs, ascending to his room.

When Alan went up to his own room, after making the rounds to see that the house was locked, a droning chant came to him from the third floor. He paused in the hall and listened, then went on up to the floor above. A flickering light came to him through the half-open door of a room at the front of the house; he went a little way toward it and looked in. Two thick candles were burning before a crucifix, below which the Indian knelt, prayer book in hand and rocking to and fro as he droned his supplications.

A word or two came to Alan, but without them Wassaquam's occupation was plain; he was praying for the repose of the dead — the Catholic chant taught to him, as it had been taught undoubtedly to his fathers, by the French Jesuits of the lakes. The intoned chant for Corvet's soul, by the man who had heard the Drum, followed and still came to Alan, as he returned to the second floor.

He had not been able to determine, during the evening, Wassaquam's attitude toward him. Having no one else to trust, Alan had been obliged to put a certain amount of trust in the Indian; so as he had explained to Wassaquam that morning that the desk and the drawers in the little room off Corvet's had been forced, and had warned him to see that no one, who had not proper business there, entered the house. Wassaquam had appeared to accept this order; but now Wassaquam had implied that it was not because of Alan's order that he had refused reporters admission to the house. The developments of the day had tremendously altered things

in one respect; for Alan, the night before, had not thought of the intruder into the house as one who could claim an ordinary right of entrance there; but now he knew him to be the one who — except for Sherrill — might most naturally come to the house; one, too, for whom Wassaquam appeared to grant a certain right of direction of affairs there. So, at this thought, Alan moved angrily; the house was his — Alan's. He had noted particularly, when Sherrill had showed him the list of properties whose transfer to him Corvet had left at Sherrill's discretion, that the house was not among them; and he had understood that this was because Corvet had left Sherrill no discretion as to the house. Corvet's direct, unconditional gift of the house by deed to Alan had been one of Sherrill's reasons for believing that if Corvet had left anything which could explain his disappearance, it would be found in the house.

Unless Spearman had visited the house during the day and had obtained what he had been searching for the night before — and Alan believed he had not done that — it was still in the house. Alan's hands clenched; he would not give Spearman such a chance as that again; and he himself would continue his search of the house — exhaustively, room by room, article of furniture by article of furniture.

Alan started and went quickly to the open door of his room, as he heard voices now somewhere within the house. One of the voices he recognized as Wassaquam's; the other indistinct, thick, accusing — was unknown to him; it certainly was not Spearman's. He had not heard Wassaquam go down-stairs, and he had not heard the doorbell, so he ran first to the third floor; but the room where he had seen Wassaquam was empty.

He descended again swiftly to the first floor, and found Wassaquam standing in the front hall, alone.

"Who was here, Judah?" Alan demanded.

"A man," the Indian answered stolidly. "He was drunk; I put him out."

"What did he come for?"

"He came to see Ben. I put him out; he is gone, Alan."

Alan flung open the front door and looked out, but he saw no one.

"What did he want of Mr. Corvet, Judah?"

"I do not know. I told him Ben was not here; he was angry, but he went away."

"Has he ever come here before?"

"Yes; he comes twice."

"He has been here twice?"

"More than that; every year he comes twice, Alan. Once he came oftener."

"How long has he been doing that?"

"Since I can remember."

"Is he a friend of Mr. Corvet?"

"No friend — no!"

"But Mr. Corvet saw him when he came here?"

"Always, Alan."

"And you don't know at all what he came about?"

"How should I know? No; I do not."

Alan got his coat and hat. The sudden disappearance of the man might mean only that he had hurried away, but it might mean too that he was still lurking near the house. Alan had decided to make the circuit of the house and determine that. But as he came out on to the porch, a figure more than a block away to the south strode with uncertain step out into the light of a

street lamp, halted and faced about, and shook his fist back at the house. Alan dragged the Indian out on to the porch.

"Is that the man, Judah?" he demanded.

"Yes, Alan."

Alan ran down the steps and at full speed after the man. The other had turned west at the corner where Alan had seen him; but even though Alan slipped as he tried to run upon the snowy walks, he must be gaining fast upon him. He saw him again, when he had reached the corner where the man had turned, traveling westward with that quick uncertain step toward Clark Street; at that corner the man turned south. But when Alan reached the corner, he was nowhere in sight. To the south, Clark Street reached away, garish with electric signs and with a half dozen saloons to every block. That the man was drunk made it probable he had turned into one of these places. Alan went into every one of them for fully a half mile and looked about, but he found no one even resembling the man he had been following. He retraced his steps for several blocks, still looking; then he gave it up and returned eastward toward the Drive.

The side street leading to the Drive was less well lighted; dark entry ways and alleys opened on it; but the night was clear. The stars, with the shining sword of Orion almost overhead, gleamed with midwinter brightness, and to the west the crescent of the moon was hanging and throwing faint shadows over the snow. Alan could see at the end of the street, beyond the yellow glow of the distant boulevard lights, the smooth, chill surface of the lake. A white light rode above it; now, below the white light, he saw a red speck — the

masthead and port lanterns of a steamer northward bound. Farther out a second white glow appeared from behind the obscuration of the buildings and below it a green speck — a starboard light. The information he had gained that day enabled him to recognize in these lights two steamers passing one another at the harbor mouth.

"Red to red," Alan murmured to himself. "Green to green — Red to red, perfect safety, go ahead!" he repeated.

It brought him, with marvelous vividness, back to Constance Sherrill. Events since he had talked with her that morning had put them far apart once more; but, in another way, they were being drawn closer together. For he knew now that she was caught as well as he in the mesh of consequences of acts not their own. Benjamin Corvet, in the anguish of the last hours before fear of those consequences had driven him away, had given her a warning against Spearman so wild that it defeated itself; for Alan merely to repeat that warning, with no more than he yet knew, would be equally futile. But into the contest between Spearman and himself — that contest, he was beginning to feel, which must threaten destruction either to Spearman or to him — she had entered. Her happiness, her future, were at stake; her fate, he was certain now, depended upon discovery of those events tied tight in the mystery of Alan's own identity which Spearman knew, and the threat of which at moments appalled him. Alan winced as there came before him in the darkness of the street the vision of Constance in Spearman's arms and of the kiss that he had seen that afternoon.

He staggered, slipped, fell suddenly forward upon

his knees under a stunning, crushing blow upon his head from behind. Thought, consciousness almost lost, he struggled, twisting himself about to grasp at his assailant. He caught the man's clothing, trying to drag himself up; fighting blindly, dazedly, unable to see or think, he shouted aloud and then again, aloud. He seemed in the distance to hear answering cries; but the weight and strength of the other was bearing him down again to his knees; he tried to slip aside from it, to rise. Then another blow, crushing and sickening, descended on his head; even hearing left him and, unconscious, he fell forward on to the snow and lay still.

CHAPTER X

A WALK BESIDE THE LAKE

"THE name seems like Sherrill," the interne agreed. "He said it before when we had him on the table up-stairs; and he has said it now twice distinctly — Sherrill."

"His name, do you think?"

"I shouldn't say so; he seems trying to speak to some one named Sherrill."

The nurse waited a few minutes. "Yes; that's how it seems to me, sir. He said something that sounded like 'Connie' a while ago, and once he said 'Jim.' There are only four Sherrills in the telephone book, two of them in Evanston and one way out in Minoota."

"The other?"

"They're only about six blocks from where he was picked up; but they're on the Drive — the Lawrence Sherrills."

The interne whistled softly and looked more interestedly at his patient's features. He glanced at his watch, which showed the hour of the morning to be half-past four. "You'd better make a note of it," he said. "He's not a Chicagoan; his clothes were made somewhere in Kansas. He'll be conscious some time during the day; there's only a slight fracture, and — Perhaps you'd better call the Sherrill house, anyway. If

he's not known there, no harm done; and if he's one of their friends and he should . . ."

The nurse nodded and moved off.

Thus it was that at a quarter to five Constance Sherrill was awakened by the knocking of one of the servants at her father's door. Her father went down-stairs to the telephone instrument where he might reply without disturbing Mrs. Sherrill. Constance, kimona over her shoulders, stood at the top of the stairs and waited. It became plain to her at once that whatever had happened had been to Alan Conrad.

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . You are giving him every possible care? . . . At once."

She ran part way down the stairs and met her father as he came up. He told her of the situation briefly.

"He was attacked on the street late last night; he was unconscious when they found him and took him to the hospital, and has been unconscious ever since. They say it was an ordinary street attack for robbery. I shall go at once, of course; but you can do nothing. He would not know you if you came; and of course he is in competent hands. No; no one can say yet how seriously he is injured."

She waited in the hall while her father dressed, after calling the garage on the house telephone for him and ordering the motor. When he had gone, she returned anxiously to her own rooms; he had promised to call her after reaching the hospital and as soon as he had learned the particulars of Alan's condition. It was ridiculous, of course, to attach any responsibility to her father or herself for what had happened to Alan — a street attack such as might have happened to any one — yet she felt that they were in part responsible.

Alan Conrad had come to Chicago, not by their direction, but by Benjamin Corvet's; but Uncle Benny being gone, they had been the ones who met him, they had received him into their own house; but they had not thought to warn him of the dangers of the city and, afterward, they had let him go to live alone in the house in Astor Street with no better adviser than Wassaquam. Now, and perhaps because they had not warned him, he had met injury and, it might be, more than mere injury; he might be dying.

She walked anxiously up and down her room, clutching her kimona about her; it would be some time yet before she could hear from her father. She went to the telephone on the stand beside her bed and called Henry Spearman at his apartments. His servant answered; and, after an interval, Henry's voice came to her. She told him all that she knew of what had occurred.

"Do you want me to go over to the hospital?" he asked at once.

"No; father has gone. There is nothing any one can do. I'll call you again as soon as I hear from father."

He seemed to appreciate from her tone the anxiety she felt; for he set himself to soothe and encourage her. She listened, answered, and then hung up the receiver, anxious not to interfere with the expected call from her father. She moved about the room again, oppressed by the long wait, until the 'phone rang, and she sprang to it; it was her father calling from the hospital. Alan had had a few moments' consciousness, but Sherrill had not been allowed to see him; now, by the report of the nurse, Alan was sleeping, and both nurse and internes assured Sherrill that, this being the case,

there was no reason for anxiety concerning him; but Sherrill would wait at the hospital a little longer to make sure. Constance's breath caught as she answered him, and her eyes filled with tears of relief. She called Henry again, and he evidently had been waiting, for he answered at once; he listened without comment to her repetition of her father's report.

"All right," he said, when she had finished. "I'm coming over, Connie."

"Now?"

"Yes; right away."

"You must give me time to dress!" His assumption of right to come to her at this early hour recalled to her forcibly the closer relation which Henry now assumed as existing between them; indeed, as more than existing, as progressing. And had not she admitted that relation by telephoning to him during her anxiety? She had not thought how that must appear to him; she had not thought about it at all; she had just done it.

She had been one of those who think of betrothal in terms of question and answer, of a moment when decision is formulated and spoken; she had supposed that, by withholding reply to Henry's question put even before Uncle Benny went away, she was thereby maintaining the same relation between Henry and herself. But now she was discovering that this was not so; she was realizing that Henry had not required formal answer to him because he considered that such answer had become superfluous; her yes, if she accepted him now, would not establish a new bond, it would merely acknowledge what was already understood. She had accepted that — had she not — when, in the rush of her feeling, she had thrust her hand into his the day

before; she had accepted it, even more undeniably, when he had seized her and kissed her.

Not that she had sought or even consciously permitted. that; it had, indeed, surprised her. While they were alone together, and he was telling her things about himself, somewhat as he had at the table at Field's, Alan Conrad was announced, and she had risen to go. Henry had tried to detain her; then, as he looked down at her, hot impulse had seemed to conquer him; he caught her, irresistibly; amazed, bewildered, she looked up at him, and he bent and kissed her. The power of his arms about her — she could feel them yet, sometimes — half frightened, half enthralled her. But his lips against her cheek — she had turned her lips away so that his pressed her cheek! She had been quite unable to know how she had felt then, because at that instant she had realized that she was seen. So she had disengaged herself as quickly as possible and, after Alan was gone, she had fled to her room without going back to Henry at all.

How could she have expected Henry to have interpreted that flight from him as disapproval when she had not meant it as that; when, indeed, she did not know herself what was stirring in her that instinct to go away alone? She had not by that disowned the new relation which he had accepted as established between them. And did she wish to disown it now? What had happened had come sooner and with less of her will active in it than she had expected; but she knew it was only what she had expected to come. The pride she had felt in being with him was, she realized, only anticipatory of the pride she would experience as his wife. When she considered the feeling of her family and her friends,

she knew that, though some would go through the formal deploring that Henry had not better birth, all would be satisfied and more than satisfied; they would even boast about Henry a little, and entertain him in her honor, and show him off. There was no one — now that poor Uncle Benny was gone — who would seriously deplore it at all.

Constance had recognized no relic of uneasiness from Uncle Benny's last appeal to her; she understood that thoroughly. Or, at least, she *had* understood that; now was there a change in the circumstances of that understanding, because of what had happened to Alan, that she found herself re-defining to herself her relation with Henry? No; it had nothing to do with Henry, of course; it referred only to Benjamin Corvet. Uncle Benny had "gone away" from his house on Astor Street, leaving his place there to his son, Alan Conrad. Something which had disturbed and excited Alan had happened to him on the first night he had passed in that house; and now, it appeared, he had been prevented from passing a second night there. What had prevented him had been an attempted robbery upon the street, her father had said. But suppose it had been something else than robbery.

She could not formulate more definitely this thought, but it persisted; she could not deny it entirely and shake it off.

To Alan Conrad, in the late afternoon of that day, this same thought was coming far more definitely and far more persistently. He had been awake and sane since shortly after noonday. The pain of a head which ached throbbingly and of a body bruised and sore was beginning to give place to a feeling merely of lassitude

— a languor which revisited incoherence upon him when he tried to think. He shifted himself upon his bed and called the nurse.

"How long am I likely to have to stay here?" he asked her.

"The doctors think not less than two weeks, Mr. Conrad."

He realized, as he again lay silent, that he must put out of his head now all expectation of ever finding in Corvet's house any such record as he had been looking for. If there had been a record, it unquestionably would be gone before he could get about again to seek it; and he could not guard against its being taken from the house; for, if he had been hopeless of receiving credence for any accusation he might make against Spearman while he was in health, how much more hopeless was it now, when everything he would say could be put to the credit of his injury and to his delirium! He could not even give orders for the safeguarding of the house and its contents — his own property — with assurance that they would be carried out.

The police and hospital attendants, he had learned, had no suspicion of anything but that he had been the victim of one of the footpads who, during that month, had been attacking and robbing nightly. Sherrill, who had visited him about two o'clock, had showed that he suspected no other possibility. Alan could not prove otherwise; he had not seen his assailant's face; it was most probable that if he had seen it, he would not have recognized it. But the man who had assailed him had meant to kill; he had not been any ordinary robber. That purpose, blindly recognized and fought against by Alan in their struggle, had been unmistak-

able. Only the chance presence of passers-by, who had heard Alan's shouts and responded to them, had prevented the execution of his purpose, and had driven the man to swift flight for his own safety.

Alan had believed, in his struggle with Spearman in Corvet's library, that Spearman might have killed rather than have been discovered there. Were there others to whom Alan's presence had become a threat so serious that they would proceed even to the length of calculated murder? He could not know that. The only safe plan was to assume that persons, in number unknown, had definite, vital interest in his "removal" by violence or otherwise, and that, among them, he must reckon Henry Spearman; and he must fight them alone. For Sherrill's liking for him, even Constance Sherrill's interest and sympathy were nullified in practical intent by their admiration for and their complete confidence in Spearman. It did not matter that Alan might believe that, in fighting Spearman, he was fighting not only for himself but for her; he knew now certainly that he must count her as Spearman's; her! Things swam before him again dizzily as he thought of her; and he sank back and closed his eyes.

A little before six Constance Sherrill and Spearman called to inquire after him and were admitted for a few moments to his room. She came to him, bent over him, while she spoke the few words of sympathy the nurse allowed to her; she stood back then while Spearman spoke to him. In the succeeding days, he saw her nearly every day, accompanied always by her father or Spearman; it was the full two weeks the nurse had allotted for his remaining in the hospital before he saw her alone.

They had brought him home, the day before — she and her father, in the motor — to the house on Astor Street. He had insisted on returning there, refusing the room in their house which they had offered; but the doctor had enjoined outdoors and moderate exercise for him, and she had made him promise to come and walk with her. He went to the Sherrill house about ten o'clock, and they walked northward toward the park.

It was a mild, sunny morning with warm wind from the south, which sucked up the last patches of snow from the lawns and dried the tiny trickles of water across the walks. Looking to the land, one might say that spring soon would be on the way; but, looking to the lake, midwinter held. The counterscrap of concrete, beyond the withered sod that edged the Drive, was sheathed in ice; the frozen spray-hummocks beyond steamed in the sun; and out as far as one could see, floes floated close together, exposing only here and there a bit of blue. Wind, cold and chilling, wafted off this ice field, taking the warm south breeze upon its flanks.

Glancing up at her companion from time to time, Constance saw the color coming to his face, and he strode beside her quite steadily. Whatever was his inheritance, his certainly were stamina and vitality; a little less — or a little dissipation of them — and he might not have recovered at all, much less have leaped back to strength as he had done. For since yesterday, the languor which had held him was gone.

They halted a minute near the south entrance of the park at the St. Gaudens' "Lincoln," which he had not previously seen. The gaunt, sad figure of the "rail-splitter" in his ill-fitting clothes, seemed to recall some-

thing to him; for he glanced swiftly at her as they turned away.

"Miss Sherrill," he asked, "have you ever stayed out in the country?"

"I go to northern Michigan, up by the straits, almost every summer for part of the time, at least; and once in a while we open the house in winter too for a week or so. It's quite wild — trees and sand and shore and the water. I've had some of my best times up there."

"You've never been out on the plains?"

"Just to pass over them on the train on the way to the coast."

"That would be in winter or in spring; I was thinking about the plains in late summer, when we — Jim and Betty, the children of the people I was with in Kansas —"

"I remember them."

"When we used to play at being pioneers in our sunflower shacks."

"Sunflower shacks?" she questioned.

"I was dreaming we were building them again when I was delirious just after I was hurt, it seems. I thought that I was back in Kansas and was little again. The prairie was all brown as it is in late summer, brown billows of dried grass which let you see the chips of limestone and flint scattered on the ground beneath; and in the hollows there were acres and acres of sunflowers, three times as tall as either Jim or I, and with stalks as thick as a man's wrist, where Jim and Betty and I . . . and you, Miss Sherrill, were playing."

"I?"

"We cut paths through the sunflowers with a corn

knife," Alan continued, not looking at her, "and built houses in them by twining the cut stalks in and out among those still standing. I'd wondered, you see, what you must have been like when you were a little girl, so, I suppose, when I was delirious, I saw you that way."

She had looked up at him a little apprehensively, afraid that he was going to say something more; but his look reassured her.

"Then that," she hazarded, "must have been how the hospital people learned our name. I'd wondered about that; they said you were unconscious first, and then delirious and when you spoke you said, among other names, mine — Connie and Sherrill."

He colored and glanced away. "I thought they might have told you that, so I wanted you to know. They say that in a dream, or in delirium, after your brain establishes the first absurdity — like your playing out among the sunflowers with me when we were little — everything else is consistent. I wouldn't call a little girl 'Miss Sherrill,' of course. Ever since I've known you, I couldn't help thinking a great deal about you; you're not like any one else I've ever known. But I didn't want you to think I thought of you — familiarly."

"I speak of you always as Alan to father," she said.

He was silent for a moment. "They lasted hardly for a day — those sunflower houses, Miss Sherrill," he said quietly. "They withered almost as soon as they were made. Castles in Kansas, one might say! No one could live in them."

Apprehensive again, she colored. He had recalled

to her, without meaning to do so, she thought, that he had seen her in Spearman's arms; she was quite sure that recollection of this was in his mind. But in spite of this — or rather, exactly because of it — she understood that he had formed his own impression of the relation between Henry and herself and that, consequently, he was not likely to say anything more like this.

They had walked east, across the damp, dead turf to where the Drive leaves the shore and is built out into the lake; as they crossed to it on the smooth ice of the lagoon between, he took her arm to steady her.

"There is something I have been wanting to ask you," she said.

"Yes."

"That night when you were hurt — it was for robbery, they said. What do you think about it?" She watched him as he looked at her and then away; but his face was completely expressionless.

"The proceedings were a little too rapid for me to judge, Miss Sherrill."

"But there was no demand upon you to give over your money before you were attacked?"

"No."

She breathed a little more quickly. "It must be a strange sensation," she observed, "to know that some one has tried to kill you."

"It must, indeed."

"You mean you don't think that he tried to kill you?"

"The police captain thinks not; he says it was the work of a man new to the blackjack, and he hit harder and oftener than he needed. He says that sort are the

dangerous ones — that one's quite safe in the hands of an experienced slugger, as you would be with the skilful man in any line. I never thought of it that way before. He almost made it into an argument for leaving the trained artists loose on the streets, for the safety of the public, instead of turning the business over to boys only half educated."

"What do you think about the man yourself?" Constance persisted.

"The apprentice who practiced on me?"

She waited, watching his eyes. "I was hardly in a condition, Miss Sherrill, to appreciate anything about the man at all. Why do you ask?"

"Because —" She hesitated an instant, "if you were attacked to be killed, it meant that you must have been attacked as the son of — Mr. Corvet. Then that meant — at least it implied, that Mr. Corvet was killed, that he did not go away. You see that, of course."

"Were you the only one who thought that? Or did some one speak to you about it?"

"No one did; I spoke to father. He thought —"

"Yes."

"Well, if Mr. Corvet was murdered — I'm following what father thought, you understand — it involved something a good deal worse perhaps than anything that could have been involved if he had only gone away. The facts we had made it certain that — if what had happened to him was death at the hands of another — he must have foreseen that death and, seeking no protection for himself . . . it implied, that he preferred to die rather than to ask protection — that there was something whose concealment he thought mattered even more to him than life. It — it might have meant that

he considered his life was . . . due to whomever took it." Her voice, which had become very low, now ceased. She was speaking to Alan of his father — a father whom he had never known, and whom he could not have recognized by sight until she showed him the picture a few weeks before; but she was speaking of his father.

"Mr. Sherrill didn't feel that it was necessary for him to do anything, even though he thought that?"

"If Mr. Corvet was dead, we could do him no good, surely, by telling this to the police; if the police succeeded in finding out all the facts, we would be doing only what Uncle Benny did not wish — what he preferred death to. We could not tell the police about it without telling them all about Mr. Corvet too. So father would not let himself believe that you had been attacked to be killed. He had to believe the police theory was sufficient."

Alan made no comment at once. "Wassaquam believes Mr. Corvet is dead," he said finally. "He told me so. Does your father believe that?"

"I think he is beginning to believe it."

They had reached the little bridge that breaks the Drive and spans the channel through which the motor boats reach harbor in the lagoon; he rested his arms upon the rail of the bridge and looked down into the channel, now frozen. He seemed to her to consider and to decide upon something.

"I've not told any one," he said, now watching her, "how I happened to be out of the house that night. I followed a man who came there to the house. Wassaquam did not know his name. He did not know Mr. Corvet was gone; for he came there to see Mr. Corvet. He was not an ordinary friend of Mr. Corvet's; but he

had come there often; Wassaquam did not know why. Wassaquam had sent the man away, and I ran out after him; but I could not find him."

He stopped an instant, studying her. "That was not the first man who came to the house," he went on quickly, as she was about to speak. "I found a man in Mr. Corvet's house the first night that I spent there. Wassaquam was away, you remember, and I was alone in the house."

"A man there in the house?" she repeated.

"He wasn't there when I entered the house — at least I don't think he was. I heard him below, after I had gone up-stairs. I came down then and saw him. He was going through Mr. Corvet's things — not the silver and all that, but through his desks and files and cases. He was looking for something — something which he seemed to want very much; when I interfered, it greatly excited him."

They had turned back from the bridge and were returning along the way that they had come; but now she stopped and looked up at him.

"What happened when you 'interfered'?"

"A queer thing."

"What?"

"I frightened him."

"Frightened him?" She had appreciated in his tone more significance than the casual meaning of the words.

"He thought I was a ghost."

"A ghost. Whose ghost?"

He shrugged. "I don't know; some one whom he seemed to have known pretty well — and whom Mr. Corvet knew, he thought."

"Why didn't you tell us this before?"

"At least — I am telling you now, Miss Sherrill. I frightened him, and he got away. But I had seen him plainly. I can describe him. . . . You've talked with your father of the possibility that something might 'happen' to me such as, perhaps, happened to Mr. Corvet. If anything does happen to me, a description of the man may . . . prove useful."

He saw the color leave her face, and her eyes brighten; he accepted this for agreement on her part. Then clearly and definitely as he could, he described Spearman to her. She did not recognize the description; he had known she would not. Had not Spearman been in Duluth? Beyond that, was not connection of Spearman with the prowler in Corvet's house the one connection of all most difficult for her to make? But he saw her fixing and recording the description in her mind.

They were silent as they went on toward her home. He had said all he could, or dared to say; to tell her that the man had been Spearman would not merely have awakened her incredulity; it would have destroyed credence utterly. A definite change in their relation to one another had taken place during their walk. The fullness, the frankness of the sympathy there had been between them almost from their first meeting, had gone; she was quite aware, he saw, that he had not frankly answered her questions; she was aware that in some way he had drawn back from her and shut her out from his thoughts about his own position here. But he had known that this must be so; it had been his first definite realization after his return to consciousness in the hospital when, knowing now her relation to Spearman, he

had found all questions which concerned his relations with the people here made immeasurably more acute by the attack upon him.

She asked him to come in and stay for luncheon, as they reached her home, but she asked it without urging; at his refusal she moved slowly up the steps; but she halted when she saw that he did not go on.

"Miss Sherrill," he said, looking up at her, "how much money is there in your house?"

She smiled, amused and a little perplexed; then sobered as she saw his intentness on her answer.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean — how much is ordinarily kept there?"

"Why, very little in actual cash. We pay everything by check — tradesmen and servants; and even if we happen not to have a charge account where we make a purchase, they know who we are and are always willing to charge it to us."

"Thank you. It would be rather unusual then for you — or your neighbors — to have currency at hand exceeding the hundreds?"

"Exceeding the hundreds? That means in the thousands — or at least one thousand; yes, for us, it would be quite unusual."

She waited for him to explain why he had asked; it was not, she felt sure, for any reason which could readily suggest itself to her. But he only thanked her again and lifted his hat and moved away. Looking after him from the window after she had entered the house, she saw him turn the corner in the direction of Astor Street.

CHAPTER XI

A CALLER

AS the first of the month was approaching, Wassaquam had brought his household bills and budget to Alan that morning directly after breakfast. The accounts, which covered expenses for the month just ending and a small amount of cash to be carried for the month beginning, were written upon a sheet of foolscap in neat, unshaded writing exactly like the models in a copybook — each letter formed as carefully and precisely as is the work done upon an Indian basket. The statement accounted accurately for a sum of cash in hand upon the first of February, itemized charged expenses, and totaled the bills. For March, Wassaquam evidently proposed a continuance of the establishment upon the present lines. To provide for that, and to furnish Alan with whatever sums he needed, Sherrill had made a considerable deposit in Alan's name in the bank where he carried his own account; and Alan had accompanied Sherrill to the bank to be introduced and had signed the necessary cards in order to check against the deposit; but, as yet, he had drawn nothing.

Alan had required barely half of the hundred dollars which Benjamin Corvet had sent to Blue Rapids, for his expenses in Chicago; and he had brought with him from "home" a hundred dollars of his own. He had

used that for his personal expenses since. The amount which Wassaquam now desired to pay the bills was much more than Alan had on hand; but that amount was also much less than the eleven hundred dollars which the servant listed as cash on hand. This, Wassaquam stated, was in currency and kept by him. Benjamin always had had him keep that much in the house; Wassaquam would not touch that sum now for the payment of current expenses.

This sum of money kept inviolate troubled Alan. Constance Sherrill's statement that, for her family at least, to keep such a sum would have been unusual, increased this trouble; it did not, however, preclude the possibility that others than the Sherrills might keep such amounts of cash on hand. On the first of the month, therefore Alan drew upon his new bank account to Wassaquam's order; and in the early afternoon Wassaquam went to the bank to cash his check — one of the very few occasions when Alan had been left in the house alone; Wassaquam's habit, it appeared, was to go about on the first of the month and pay the tradesmen in person.

Some two hours later, and before Wassaquam could have been expected back, Alan, in the room which had become his, was startled by a sound of heavy pounding, which came suddenly to him from a floor below. Shouts — heavy, thick, and unintelligible — mingled with the pounding. He ran swiftly down the stairs, then on and down the service stairs into the basement. The door to the house from the areaway was shaking to irregular, heavy blows, which stopped as Alan reached the lower hallway; the shouts continued still a moment more. Now that the noise of pounding did not

interfere, Alan could make out what the man was saying: "Ben Corvet!"— the name was almost unintelligible —"Ben Corvet! Ben!" Then the shouts stopped too.

Alan sped to the door and turned back the latch. The door bore back upon him, not from a push, but from a weight without which had fallen against it. A big, heavy man, with a rough cap and mackinaw coat, would have fallen upon the floor, if Alan had not caught him. His weight in Alan's arms was so dull, so inert that, if violence had been his intention, there was nothing to be feared from him now. Alan looked up, therefore, to see if any one had come with him. The alley and the street were clear. The snow in the areaway showed that the man had come to the door alone and with great difficulty; he had fallen once upon the walk. Alan dragged the man into the house and went back and closed the door.

He returned and looked at him. The man was like, very like the one whom Alan had followed from the house on the night when he was attacked; certainty that this was the same man came quickly to him. He seized the fellow again and dragged him up the stairs and to the lounge in the library. The warmth revived him; he sat up, coughing and breathing quickly and with a loud, rasping wheeze. The smell of liquor was strong upon him; his clothes reeked with the unclean smell of barrel houses.

He was, or had been, a very powerful man, broad and thick through with overdeveloped — almost distorting — muscles in his shoulders; but his body had become fat and soft, his face was puffed, and his eyes watery and bright; his brown hair, which was shot all through

with gray, was dirty and matted; he had three or four days' growth of beard. He was clothed as Alan had seen deck hands on the steamers attired; he was not less than fifty, Alan judged, though his condition made estimate difficult. When he sat up and looked about, it was plain that whiskey was only one of the forces working upon him — the other was fever which burned up and sustained him intermittently.

"'Lo!" he greeted Alan. "Where's shat damn Injin, hey? I knew Ben Corvet was shere — knew he was shere all time. 'Course he's shere; he got to be shere. That's shright. You go get 'im!"

"Who are you?" Alan asked.

"Say, who'r *you?* What t'hells syou doin' here? Never see you before . . . go — go get Ben Corvet. Jus' say Ben Corvet, Lu — luke's shere. Ben Corvet'll know Lu — luke all right; alwaysh, alwaysh knows me. . . ."

"What's the matter with you?" Alan had drawn back but now went to the man again. The first idea that this might have been merely some old sailor who had served Benjamin Corvet or, perhaps, had been a comrade in the earlier days, had been banished by the confident arrogance of the man's tone — an arrogance not to be explained, entirely, by whiskey or by the fever.

"How long have you been this way?" Alan demanded. "Where did you come from?" He put his hand on the wrist; it was very hot and dry; the pulse was racing, irregular; at seconds it seemed to stop; for other seconds it was continuous. The fellow coughed and bent forward. "What is it — pneumonia?" Alan tried to straighten him up.

"Gi' me drink! . . . Go get Ben Corvet, I tell you!

. . . Get Ben Corvet quick! Say — yous shear? You get me Ben Corvet; you better get Ben Corvet; you tell him Lu — uke's here; won't wait any more; goin' t'have my money now . . . sright away, your shear? Kick me out s'loon; I guess not no more. Ben Corvet give me all money I want or I talk!"

"Talk!"

"Syou know it! I ain't goin'. . . ." He choked up and tottered back; Alan, supporting him, laid him down and stayed beside him until his coughing and choking ceased, and there was only the rattling rasp of his breathing. When Alan spoke to him again, Luke's eyes opened, and he narrated recent experiences bitterly; all were blamed to Ben Corvet's absence; Luke, who had been drinking heavily a few nights before, had been thrown out when the saloon was closed; that was Ben Corvet's fault; if Ben Corvet had been around, Luke would have had money, all the money any one wanted; no one would have thrown out Luke then. Luke slept in the snow, all wet. When he arose, the saloon was open again, and he got more whiskey, but not enough to get him warm. He hadn't been warm since. That was Ben Corvet's fault. Ben Corvet better be 'round now; Luke wouldn't stand any more.

Alan felt of the pulse again; he opened the coat and under-flannels and felt the heaving chest. He went to the hall and looked in the telephone directory. He remembered the name of the druggist on the corner of Clark Street and he telephoned him, giving the number on Astor Street.

"I want a doctor right away," he said. "Any good doctor; the one that you can get quickest." The

druggist promised that a physician would be there within a quarter of an hour. Alan went back to Luke, who was silent now except for the gasp of his breath; he did not answer when Alan spoke to him, except to ask for whiskey. Alan, gazing down at him, felt that the man was dying; liquor and his fever had sustained him only to bring him to the door; now the collapse had come; the doctor, even if he arrived very soon, could do no more than perhaps delay the end. Alan went up-stairs and brought down blankets and put them over Luke; he cut the knotted laces of the soaked shoes and pulled them off; he also took off the mackinaw and the undercoat. The fellow, appreciating that care was being given him, relaxed; he slept deeply for short periods, stirred and started up, then slept again. Alan stood watching, a strange, sinking tremor shaking him. This man had come there to make a claim — a claim which many times before, apparently, Benjamin Corvet had admitted. Luke came to Ben Corvet for money which he always got — all he wanted — the alternative to giving which was that Luke would "talk." Blackmail, that meant, of course; blackmail which not only Luke had told of, but which Wassaquam too had admitted, as Alan now realized. Money for blackmail — that was the reason for that thousand dollars in cash which Benjamin Corvet always kept at the house.

Alan turned, with a sudden shiver of revulsion, toward his father's chair in place before the hearth; there for hours each day his father had sat with a book or staring into the fire, always with what this man knew hanging over him, always arming against it with the thousand dollars ready for this man, whenever he

came. Meeting blackmail, paying blackmail for as long as Wassaquam had been in the house, for as long as it took to make the once muscular, powerful figure of the sailor who threatened to "talk" into the swollen, whiskey-soaked hulk of the man dying now on the lounge.

For his state that day, the man blamed Benjamin Corvet. Alan, forcing himself to touch the swollen face, shuddered at thought of the truth underlying that accusation. Benjamin Corvet's act — whatever it might be that this man knew — undoubtedly had destroyed not only him who paid the blackmail but him who received it; the effect of that act was still going on, destroying, blighting. Its threat of shame was not only against Benjamin Corvet; it threatened also all whose names must be connected with Corvet's. Alan had refused to accept any stigma in his relationship with Corvet; but now he could not refuse to accept it. This shame threatened Alan; it threatened also the Sherrills. Was it not because of this that Benjamin Corvet had objected to Sherrill's name appearing with his own in the title of the ship-owning firm? And was it not because of this that Corvet's intimacy with Sherrill and his comradeship with Constance had been alternated by times in which he had frankly avoided them both? What Sherrill had told Alan and even Corvet's gifts to him had not been able to make Alan feel that without question Corvet was his father, but now shame and horror were making him feel it; in horror at Corvet's act — whatever it might be — and in shame at Corvet's cowardice, Alan was thinking of Benjamin Corvet as his father. This shame, this horror, were his inheritance.

He left Luke and went to the window to see if the doctor was coming. He had called the doctor because in his first sight of Luke he had not recognized that Luke was beyond the aid of doctors and because to summon a doctor under such circumstances was the right thing to do; but he had thought of the doctor also as a witness to anything Luke might say. But now — did he want a witness? He had no thought of concealing anything for his own sake or for his father's; but he would, at least, want the chance to determine the circumstances under which it was to be made public.

He hurried back to Luke. "What is it, Luke?" he cried to him. "What can you tell? Listen! Luke — Luke, is it about the *Miwaka* — the *Miwaka*? Luke!"

Luke had sunk into a stupor; Alan shook him and shouted in his ear without awakening response. As Alan straightened and stood hopelessly looking down at him, the telephone bell rang sharply. Thinking it might be something about the doctor, he went to it and answered it. Constance Sherrill's voice came to him; her first words made it clear that she was at home and had just come in.

"The servants tell me some one was making a disturbance beside your house a while ago," she said, "and shouting something about Mr. Corvet. Is there something wrong there? Have you discovered something?"

He shook excitedly while, holding his hand over the transmitter lest Luke should break out again and she should hear it, he wondered what he should say to her. He could think of nothing, in his excitement, which

would reassure her and merely put her off; he was not capable of controlling his voice so as to do that.

"Please don't ask me just now, Miss Sherrill," he managed. "I'll tell you what I can — later."

His reply, he recognized, only made her more certain that there was something the matter, but he could not add anything to it. He found Luke, when he went back to him, still in coma; the blood-shot veins stood out against the ghastly grayness of his face, and his stertorous breathing sounded through the rooms.

Constance Sherrill had come in a few moments before from an afternoon reception; the servants told her at once that something was happening at Mr. Corvet's. They had heard shouts and had seen a man pounding upon the door there, but they had not taken it upon themselves to go over there. She had told the chauffeur to wait with the motor and had run at once to the telephone and called Alan; his attempt to put her off made her certain that what had happened was not finished but was still going on. Her anxiety and the sense of their responsibility for Alan overrode at once all other thought. She told the servants to call her father at the office and tell him something was wrong at Mr. Corvet's; then she called her maid and hurried out to the motor.

"To Mr. Corvet's — quickly!" she directed.

Looking through the front doors of her car as it turned into Astor Street, she saw a young man, carrying a doctor's case, run up the steps of Corvet's house. This, quite unreasonably since she had just talked with Alan, added to her alarm; she put her hand on the catch of the door and opened it a little so as to be

ready to leave the car as soon as it stopped. As the car drew to the curb, she sprang out, and stopped only long enough to tell the chauffeur to be attentive and to wait ready to come into the house, if he was called.

The man with the bag — Constance recognized him as a young doctor who was starting in practice in the neighborhood — was just being admitted as she and her maid reached the steps. Alan stood holding the door open and yet blocking entrance when she came up. The sight of him told her that it was not physical hurt that happened to him, but his face showed her there had been basis for her fright.

"You must not come in!" he denied her; but she followed the doctor so that Alan could not close the door upon her. He yielded then, and she and her maid went on into the hall.

She started as she saw the figure upon the couch in the library, and as the sound of its heavy breathing reached her; and the wild fancy which had come to her when the servants had told her of what was going on — a fancy that Uncle Benny had come back — was banished instantly.

Alan led her into the room across from the library.

"You shouldn't have come in," he said. "I shouldn't have let you in; but — you saw him."

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"Know him?" She shook her head.

"I mean, you've never seen him before?"

"No."

"His name is Luke — he speaks of himself by that name. Did you ever hear my father mention a man named Luke?"

"No; never."

Luke's voice cut suddenly their conversation; the doctor probably had given him some stimulant.

"Where'sh Ben Corvet?" Luke demanded arrogantly of the doctor. "You go get Ben Corvet! Tell Ben Corvet I want drink right away. Tell Ben Corvet I want my thousan' dollar . . . !"

Constance turned swiftly to her maid. "Go out to the car and wait for me," she commanded.

Luke's muffled, heavy voice went on; moments while he fought for breath interrupted it.

"You hear me, you damn Injin! . . . You go tell Ben Corvet I want my thousan' dollars, or I make it two nex' time! You hear me; you go tell Ben Corvet. . . . You let me go, you damn Injin!". . .

Through the doorway to the library they could see the doctor force Luke back upon the couch; Luke fought him furiously; then, suddenly as he had stirred to strength and fury, Luke collapsed again. His voice went on a moment more, rapidly growing weaker:

"You tell Ben Corvet I want my money, or I'll tell. He knows what I'll tell. . . . You don't know, you Injin devil. . . . Ben Corvet knows, and I know. . . . Tell him I'll tell . . . I'll tell . . . I'll tell!" The threatening voice stopped suddenly.

Constance, very pale, again faced Alan. "Of course, I understand," she said. "Uncle Benny has been paying blackmail to this man. For years, perhaps. . . ." She repeated the word after an instant, in a frightened voice, "Blackmail!"

"Won't you please go, Miss Sherrill?" Alan urged her. "It was good of you to come; but you mustn't stay now. He's — he's dying, of course."

She seated herself upon a chair. "I'm going to stay with you," she said simply. It was not, she knew, to share the waiting for the man in the next room to die; in that, of itself, there could be nothing for him to feel. It was to be with him while realization which had come to her was settling upon him too — realization of what this meant to him. He was realizing that, she thought; he had realized it; it made him, at moments, forget her while, listening for sounds from the other room, he paced back and forth beside the table or stood staring away, clinging to the portières. He left her presently, and went across the hall to the doctor. The man on the couch had stirred as though to start up again; the voice began once more, but now its words were wholly indistinguishable, meaningless, incoherent. They stopped, and Luke lay still; the doctor — Alan was helping him now — arranged a quite inert form upon the couch. The doctor bent over him.

"Is he dead?" Constance heard Alan ask.

"Not yet," the doctor answered; "but it won't be long, now."

"There's nothing you can do for him?"

The doctor shook his head.

"There's nothing you can do to make him talk — bring him to himself enough so that he will tell what he keeps threatening to tell?"

The doctor shrugged. "How many times, do you suppose, he's been drunk and still not told? Concealment is his established habit now. It's an inhibition; even in wandering, he stops short of actually telling anything."

"He came here —" Alan told briefly to the doctor

the circumstances of the man's coming. The doctor moved back from the couch to a chair and sat down.

"I'll wait, of course," he said, "until it's over. He seemed to want to say something else, and after a moment he came out with it. "You needn't be afraid of my talking outside . . . professional secrecy, of course."

Alan came back to Constance. Outside, the gray of dusk was spreading, and within the house it had grown dark; Constance heard the doctor turn on a light, and the shadowy glow of a desk lamp came from the library. Alan walked to and fro with uneven steps; he did not speak to her, nor she to him. It was very quiet in the library; she could not even hear Luke's breathing now. Then she heard the doctor moving; Alan went to the light and switched it on, as the doctor came out to them.

"It's over," he said to Alan. "There's a law covers these cases; you may not be familiar with it. I'll make out the death certificate — pneumonia and a weak heart with alcoholism. But the police have to be notified at once; you have no choice as to that. I'll look after those things for you, if you want."

"Thank you; if you will." Alan went with the doctor to the door and saw him drive away. Returning, he drew the library portières; then, coming back to Constance, he picked up her muff and collar from the chair where she had thrown them, and held them out to her,

"You'll go now, Miss Sherrill," he said. "Indeed, you mustn't stay here — your car's still waiting, and — you mustn't stay here . . . in this house!"

He was standing, waiting to open the door for her,

almost where he had halted on that morning, a few weeks ago, when he had first come to the house in answer to Benjamin Corvet's summons; and she was where she had stood to receive him. Memory of how he had looked then — eager, trembling a little with excitement, expecting only to find his father and happiness — came to her; and as it contrasted with the way she saw him now, she choked queerly as she tried to speak. He was very white, but quite controlled; lines not upon his face before had come there.

"Won't you come over home with me," she said, "and wait for father there till we can think this thing out together?"

Her sweetness almost broke him down. "This . . . together! Think this out! Oh, it's plain enough, isn't it? For years — for as long as Wassaquam has been here, my father has been seeing that man and paying blackmail to him twice a year, at least! He lived in that man's power. He kept money in the house for him always! It wasn't anything imaginary that hung over my father — or anything created in his own mind. It was something real — real; it was disgrace — disgrace and worse — something he deserved; and that he fought with blackmail money, like a coward! Dishonor — cowardice — blackmail!"

She drew a little nearer to him. "You didn't want me to know," she said. "You tried to put me off when I called you on the telephone; and — when I came here, you wanted me to go away before I heard. Why didn't you want me to know? If he was your father, wasn't he our — friend? Mine and my father's? You must let us help you."

As she approached, he had drawn back from her.

"No; this is mine!" he denied her. "Not yours or your father's. You have nothing to do with this. Didn't he try in little cowardly ways to keep you out of it? But he couldn't do that; your friendship meant too much to him; he couldn't keep away from you. But I can — I can do that! You must go out of this house; you must never come in here again!"

Her eyes filled, as she watched him; never had she liked him so much as now, as he moved to open the door for her.

"I thought," he said almost wistfully, "it seemed to me that, whatever he had done, it must have been mostly against me. His leaving everything to me seemed to mean that I was the one that he had wronged, and that he was trying to make it up to me. But it isn't that; it can't be that! It is something much worse than that! . . . Oh, I'm glad I haven't used much of his money! Hardly any — not more than I can give back! It wasn't the money and the house he left me that mattered; what he really left me was just this . . . dishonor, shame . . ."

The doorbell rang, and Alan turned to the door and threw it open. In the dusk the figure of the man outside was not at all recognizable; but as he entered with heavy and deliberate steps, passing Alan without greeting and going straight to Constance, Alan saw by the light in the hall that it was Spearman.

"What's up?" Spearman asked. "They tried to get your father at the office and then me, but neither of us was there. They got me afterwards at the club. They said you'd come over here; but that must have been more than two hours ago."

His gaze went on past her to the drawn hangings of

the room to the right; and he seemed to appreciate their significance; for his face whitened under its tan, and an odd hush came suddenly upon him.

"Is it Ben, Connie?" he whispered. "Ben . . . come back?"

He drew the curtains partly open. The light in the library had been extinguished, and the light that came from the hall swayed about the room with the movement of the curtains and gave a momentary semblance of life to the face of the man upon the couch. Spearman drew the curtains quickly together again, still holding to them and seeming for an instant to cling to them; then he shook himself together, threw the curtains wide apart, and strode into the room. He switched on the light and went directly to the couch; Alan followed him.

"He's — dead?"

"Who is he?" Alan demanded.

Spearman seemed to satisfy himself first as to the answer to his question. "How should I know who he is?" he asked. "There used to be a wheelsman on the *Martha Corvet* years ago who looked like him; or looked like what this fellow may have looked like once. I can't be sure."

He turned to Constance. "You're going home, Connie? I'll see you over there. I'll come back about this afterward, Conrad."

Alan followed them to the door and closed it after them. He spread the blankets over Luke. Luke's coats, which Alan had removed, lay upon a chair, and he looked them over for marks of identification; the mackinaw bore the label of a dealer in Manitowoc — wherever that might be; Alan did not

know. A side pocket produced an old briar: there was nothing else. Then Alan walked restlessly about, awaiting Spearman. Spearman, he believed, knew this man; Spearman had not even ventured upon modified denial until he was certain that the man was dead; and then he had answered so as not to commit himself, pending learning from Constance what Luke had told.

But Luke had said nothing about Spearman. It had been Corvet, and Corvet alone, of whom Luke had spoken; it was Corvet whom he had accused; it was Corvet who had given him money. Was it conceivable, then, that there had been two such events in Corvet's life? That one of these events concerned the *Miwaka* and Spearman and some one — some one "with a bullet hole above his eye"— who had "got" Corvet; and that the other event had concerned Luke and something else? It was not conceivable, Alan was sure; it was all one thing. If Corvet had had to do with the *Miwaka*, then Luke had had to do with it too. And Spearman? But if Spearman had been involved in that guilty thing, had not Luke known it? Then why had not Luke mentioned Spearman? Or had Spearman not been really involved? Had it been, perhaps, only evidence of knowledge of what Corvet had done that Spearman had tried to discover and destroy?

Alan went to the door and opened it, as he heard Spearman upon the steps again. Spearman waited only until the door had been reclosed behind him.

"Well, Conrad, what was the idea of bringing Miss Sherrill into this?"

"I didn't bring her in; I tried the best I could to keep her out."

"Out of what — exactly?"

"You know better than I do. You know exactly what it is. You know that man, Spearman; you know what he came here for. I don't mean money; I mean you know why he came here for money, and why he got it. I tried, as well as I could, to make him tell me; but he wouldn't do it. There's disgrace of some sort here, of course — disgrace that involves my father and, I think, you too. If you're not guilty with my father, you'll help me now; if you are guilty, then, at least, your refusal to help will let me know that."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Then why did you come back here? You came back here to protect yourself in some way."

"I came back, you young fool, to say something to you which I didn't want Miss Sherrill to hear. I didn't know, when I took her away, how completely you'd taken her into — your father's affairs. I told you this man may have been a wheelsman on the *Corvet;* I don't know more about him than that; I don't even know that certainly. Of course, I knew Ben Corvet was paying blackmail; I've known for years that he was giving up money to some one. I don't know who he paid it to; or for what."

The strain of the last few hours was telling upon Alan; his skin flushed hot and cold by turns. He paced up and down while he controlled himself.

"That's not enough, Spearman," he said finally. "I — I've felt you, somehow, underneath all these things. The first time I saw you, you were in this house doing something you ought not to have been doing; you fought me then; you would have killed me rather than not get away. Two weeks ago, some one

attacked me on the street — for robbery, they said; but I know it wasn't robbery —"

"You're not so crazy as to be trying to involve me in that —"

There came a sound to them from the hall, a sound unmistakably denoting some presence. Spearman jerked suddenly up; Alan, going to the door and looking into the hall, saw Wassaquam. The Indian evidently had returned to the house some time before; he had been bringing to Alan now the accounts which he had settled. He seemed to have been standing in the hall for some time, listening; but he came in now, looking inquiringly from one to the other of them.

"Not friends?" he inquired. "You and Henry?"

Alan's passion broke out suddenly. "We're anything but that, Judah. I found him, the first night I got here and while you were away, going through my father's things. I fought with him, and he ran away. He was the one that broke into my father's desks; maybe you'll believe that, even if no one else will."

"Yes?" the Indian questioned. "Yes?" It was plain that he not only believed but that believing gave him immense satisfaction. He took Alan's arm and led him into the smaller library. He knelt before one of the drawers under the bookshelves — the drawer, Alan recalled, which he himself had been examining when he had found Wassaquam watching him. He drew out the drawer and dumped its contents out upon the floor; he turned the drawer about then, and pulled the bottom out of it. Beneath the bottom which he had removed appeared now another bottom and a few sheets of paper scrawled in an uneven hand and with different colored inks.

At sight of them, Spearman, who had followed them into the room, uttered an oath and sprang forward. The Indian's small dark hand grasped Spearman's wrist, and his face twitched itself into a fierce grin which showed how little civilization had modified in him the aboriginal passions. But Spearman did not try to force his way; instead, he drew back suddenly.

Alan stooped and picked up the papers and put them in his pocket. If the Indian had not been there, it would not have been so easy for him to do that, he thought.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAND OF THE DRUM

ALAN went with Wassaquam into the front library, after the Indian had shown Spearman out.

"This was the man, Judah, who came for Mr. Corvet that night I was hurt?"

"Yes, Alan," Wassaquam said.

"He was the man, then, who came here twice a year, at least, to see Mr. Corvet."

"Yes."

"I was sure of it," Alan said. Wassaquam had made no demonstration of any sort since he had snatched at Spearman's wrist to hold him back when Alan had bent to the drawer. Alan could define no real change now in the Indian's manner; but he knew that, since Wassaquam had found him quarreling with Spearman, the Indian somehow had "placed" him more satisfactorily. The reserve, bordering upon distrust, with which Wassaquam had observed Alan, certainly was lessened. It was in recognition of this that Alan now asked, "Can you tell me now why he came here, Judah?"

"I have told you I do not know," Wassaquam replied. "Ben always saw him; Ben gave him money. I do not know why."

Alan had been holding his hand over the papers which he had thrust into his pocket; he went back into the smaller library and spread them under the reading lamp to examine them. Sherrill had assumed that Corvet had left in the house a record which would fully explain what had thwarted his life, and would shed light upon what had happened to Corvet, and why he had disappeared; Alan had accepted this assumption. The careful and secret manner in which these pages had been kept, and the importance which Wassaquam plainly had attached to them — and which must have been a result of his knowing that Corvet regarded them of the utmost importance — made Alan certain that he had found the record which Sherrill had believed must be there. Spearman's manner, at the moment of discovery, showed too that this had been what he had been searching for in his secret visit to the house.

But, as Alan looked the pages over now, he felt a chill of disappointment and chagrin. They did not contain any narrative concerning Benjamin Corvet's life; they did not even relate to a single event. They were no narrative at all. They were — in his first examination of them, he could not tell what they were.

They consisted in all of some dozen sheets of irregular size, some of which had been kept much longer than others, a few of which even appeared fresh and new. The three pages which Alan thought, from their yellowed and worn look, must be the oldest, and which must have been kept for many years, contained only a list of names and addresses. Having assured himself that there was nothing else on them, he laid them aside. The remaining pages, which he counted as ten in num-

ber, contained nearly a hundred brief clippings from newspapers; the clippings had been very carefully cut out, they had been pasted with painful regularity on the sheets, and each had been dated across its face — dates made with many different pens and with many different inks, but all in the same irregular handwriting as the letter which Alan had received from Benjamin Corvet.

Alan, his fingers numb in his disappointment, turned and examined all these pages; but they contained nothing else. He read one of the clippings, which was dated "Feb. 1912."

The passing away of one of the oldest residents of Emmet county occurred at the poor farm on Thursday of last week. Mr. Fred Westhouse was one of four brothers brought by their parents into Emmet county in 1846. He established himself here as a farmer and was well known among our people for many years. He was nearly the last of his family, which was quite well off at one time, Mr. Westhouse's three brothers and his father having perished in various disasters upon the lake. His wife died two years ago. He is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Arthur Pearl, of Flint.

He read another:

Hallford-Spens. On Tuesday last Miss Audrey Hallford, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Hallford, of this place, was united in the bonds of holy matrimony to Mr. Robert Spens, of Escanaba. Miss Audrey is one of our most popular young ladies and was valedictorian of her class at the high school graduation last year. All wish the young couple well.

He read another:

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Hal French, a daughter, Saturday afternoon last. Miss Vera Arabella French, at her arrival weighed seven and one-half pounds.

This clipping was dated, in Benjamin Corvet's hand, "Sturgeon Bay, Wis., Aug. 1914." Alan put it aside in bewilderment and amaze and took up again the sheets he first had looked at. The names and addresses on these oldest, yellowed pages had been first written, it was plain, all at the same time and with the same pen and ink, and each sheet in the beginning had contained seven or eight names. Some of these original names and even the addresses had been left unchanged, but most of them had been scratched out and altered many times — other and quite different names had been substituted; the pages had become finally almost illegible, crowded scrawls, rewritten again and again in Corvet's cramped hand. Alan strained forward, holding the first sheet to the light.

Alan seized the clippings he had looked at before and compared them swiftly with the page he had just read; two of the names — Westhouse and French — were the same as those upon this list. Suddenly he grasped the other pages of the list and looked them through for his own name; but it was not there. He dropped the sheets upon the table and got up and began to stride about the room.

He felt that in this list and in these clippings there must be, somehow, some one general meaning — they must relate in some way to one thing; they must have deeply, intensely concerned Benjamin Corvet's disappearance and his present fate, whatever that might be,

~~Franklin Elcott, Kewaunee, Wis.~~
James Elcott, Kewaunee

~~Wallace~~, Madeline Is. Lake Superior
Mrs Henry Shores

M. Burkhalter, St. Ignace, Mich.

~~James Westhouse, Conway, Emmet Co. Mich.~~
Fred Westhouse, Park Express.
Mrs Arthur Pearl, Flint, Mich.

~~George Sanders, Ludington, Mich.~~
Frances Sanders, Ludington =
~~Mrs H.G. Harden~~, Manistee, Mich.
Jovin Harden of Manistee High School.

~~Ozen~~ Papo, Escanaba, Mich.
son Flying Eagle

James Burr, near Corbay Pt. Ontario, Can.
all disappeared no trace

~~Alcide French~~, ——?
Hal French, Stingeon Bay, Wis.
baby girl
vera ara belle
6. Aug 1914

and they must concern Alan's fate as well. But in their disconnection, their incoherence, he could discern no common thread. What conceivable bond could there have been uniting Benjamin Corvet at once with an old man dying upon a poor farm in Emmet County, wherever that might be, and with a baby girl, now some two years old, in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin? He bent suddenly and swept the pages into the drawer of the table and reclosed the drawer, as he heard the doorbell ring and Wassaquam went to answer it. It was the police, Wassaquam came to tell him, who had come for Luke's body.

Alan went out into the hall to meet them. The coroner's man either had come with them or had arrived at the same time; he introduced himself to Alan, and his inquiries made plain that the young doctor whom Alan had called for Luke had fully carried out his offer to look after these things, for the coroner was already supplied with an account of what had taken place. A sailor formerly employed on the Corvet ships, the coroner's office had been told, had come to the Corvet house, ill and seeking aid; Mr. Corvet not being at home, the people of the house had taken the man in and called the doctor; but the man had been already beyond doctors' help and had died in a few hours of pneumonia and alcoholism; in Mr. Corvet's absence it had been impossible to learn the sailor's full name.

Alan left corroboration of this story mostly to Wassaquam, the servant's position in the house being more easily explicable than his own; but he found that his right there was not questioned, and that the police accepted him as a member of the household. He sus-

pected that they did not think it necessary to push inquiry very actively in such a home as this.

After the police had gone, he called Wassaquam into the library and brought the lists and clippings out again.

"Do you know at all what these are, Judah?" he asked.

"No, Alan. I have seen Ben have them, and take them out and put them back. That is all I know."

"My father never spoke to you about them?"

"Once he spoke to me; he said I was not to tell or speak of them to any one, or even to him."

"Do you know any of these people?"

He gave the lists to Wassaquam, who studied them through attentively, holding them to the lamp.

"No, Alan."

"Have you ever heard any of their names before?"

"That may be. I do not know. They are common names."

"Do you know the places?"

"Yes — the places. They are lake ports or little villages on the lakes. I have been in most of them, Alan. Emmet County, Alan, I came from there. Henry comes from there too."

"Henry Spearman?"

"Yes."

"Then that is where they hear the Drum."

"Yes, Alan."

"My father took newspapers from those places, did he not?"

Wassaquam looked over the addresses again. "Yes; from all. He took them for the shipping news, he said. And sometimes he cut pieces out of them —

these pieces, I see now; and afterward I burned the papers; he would not let me only throw them away."

"That's all you know about them, Judah?"

"Yes, Alan; that is all."

Alan dismissed the Indian, who, stolidly methodical in the midst of these events, went down-stairs and commenced to prepare a dinner which Alan knew he could not eat. Alan got up and moved about the rooms; he went back and looked over the lists and clippings once more; then he moved about again. How strange a picture of his father did these things call up to him! When he had thought of Benjamin Corvet before, it had been as Sherrill had described him, pursued by some thought he could not conquer, seeking relief in study, in correspondence with scientific societies, in anything which could engross him and shut out memory. But now he must think of him, not merely as one trying to forget; what had thwarted Corvet's life was not only in the past; it was something still going on. It had amazed Sherrill to learn that Corvet, for twenty years, had kept trace of Alan; but Corvet had kept trace in the same way and with the same secrecy of many other people — of about a score of people. When Alan thought of Corvet, alone here in his silent house, he must think of him as solicitous about these people; as seeking for their names in the newspapers which he took for that purpose, and as recording the changes in their lives. The deaths, the births, the marriages among these people had been of the intensest interest to Corvet.

It was possible that none of these people knew about Corvet; Alan had not known about him in Kansas, but had known only that some unknown person

had sent money for his support. But he appreciated that it did not matter whether they knew about him or not; for at some point common to all of them, the lives of these people must have touched Corvet's life. When Alan knew what had been that point of contact, he would know about Corvet; he would know about himself.

Alan had seen among Corvet's books a set of charts of the Great Lakes. He went and got that now and an atlas. Opening them upon the table, he looked up the addresses given on Corvet's list. They were most of them, he found, towns about the northern end of the lake; a very few were upon other lakes — Superior and Huron — but most were upon or very close to Lake Michigan. These people lived by means of the lake; they got their sustenance from it, as Corvet had lived, and as Corvet had got his wealth. Alan was feeling like one who, bound, has been suddenly unloosed. From the time when, coming to see Corvet, he had found Corvet gone until now, he had felt the impossibility of explaining from anything he knew or seemed likely to learn the mystery which had surrounded himself and which had surrounded Corvet. But these names and addresses! They indeed offered something to go upon, though Luke now was forever still, and his pockets had told Alan nothing.

He found Emmet County on the map and put his finger on it. Spearman, Wassaquam had said came from there. "The Land of the Drum!" he said aloud. Deep and sudden feeling stirred in him as he traced out this land on the chart — the little towns and villages, the islands and headlands, their lights and their uneven shores. A feeling of "home" had come to him, a

feeling he had not had on coming to Chicago. There were Indian names and French up there about the meetings of the great waters. Beaver Island! He thought of Michabou and the raft. The sense that he was of these lakes, that surge of feeling which he had felt first in conversation with Constance Sherrill was strengthened an hundredfold; he found himself humming a tune. He did not know where he had heard it; indeed, it was not the sort of tune which one knows from having heard; it was the sort which one just knows. A rhyme fitted itself to the hum,

"Seagull, seagull sit on the sand,
It's never fair weather when you're on the land."

He gazed down at the lists of names which Benjamin Corvet had kept so carefully and so secretly; these were his father's people too; these ragged shores and the islands studding the channels were the lands where his father had spent the most active part of his life. There, then — these lists now made it certain — that event had happened by which that life had been blighted. Chicago and this house here had been for his father only the abode of memory and retribution. North, there by the meeting of the waters, was the region of the wrong which was done.

"That's where I must go!" he said aloud. "That's where I must go!"

Constance Sherrill, on the following afternoon, received a telephone call from her father; he was coming home earlier than usual, he said; if she had planned to go out, would she wait until after he got there? She had, indeed, just come in and had been intending to go

out again at once; but she took off her wraps and waited for him. The afternoon's mail was upon a stand in the hall. She turned it over, looking through it — invitations, social notes. She picked from among them an envelope addressed to herself in a firm, clear hand, which, unfamiliar to her, still queerly startled her, and tore it open.

Dear Miss Sherrill, she read,

I am closing for the time being, the house which, for default of other ownership, I must call mine. The possibility that what has occurred here would cause you and your father anxiety about me in case I went away without telling you of my intention is the reason for this note. But it is not the only reason. I could not go away without telling you how deeply I appreciate the generosity and delicacy you and your father have shown to me in spite of my position here and of the fact that I had no claim at all upon you. I shall not forget those even though what happened here last night makes it impossible for me to try to see you again or even to write to you.

ALAN CONRAD.

She heard her father's motor enter the drive and ran to him with the letter in her hand.

"He's written to you then," he said, at sight of it.

"Yes."

"I had a note from him this afternoon at the office, asking me to hold in abeyance for the time being the trust that Ben had left me and returning the key of the house to me for safekeeping."

"Has he already gone?"

"I suppose so; I don't know."

"We must find out." She caught up her wraps and began to put them on. Sherrill hesitated, then assented; and they went round the block together to the Corvet house. The shades, Constance saw as they approached, were drawn; their rings at the doorbell brought no response. Sherrill, after a few instants' hesitation, took the key from his pocket and unlocked the door and they went in. The rooms, she saw, were all in perfect order; summer covers had been put upon the furniture; protecting cloths had been spread over the beds up-stairs. Her father tried the water and the gas, and found they had been turned off. After their inspection, they came out again at the front door, and her father closed it with a snapping of the spring lock.

Constance, as they walked away, turned and looked back at the old house, gloomy and dark among its newer, fresher-looking neighbors; and suddenly she choked, and her eyes grew wet. That feeling was not for Uncle Benny; the drain of days past had exhausted such a surge of feeling for him. That which she could not wink away was for the boy who had come to that house a few weeks ago and for the man who just now had gone.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THINGS FROM CORVET'S POCKETS

"Miss Constance Sherrill,
Harbor Springs, Michigan."

THE address, in large scrawling letters, was written across the brown paper of the package which had been brought from the post office in the little resort village only a few moments before. The paper covered a shoe box, crushed and old, bearing the name of S. Klug, Dealer in Fine Shoes, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The box, like the outside wrapping, was carefully tied with string.

Constance, knowing no one in Manitowoc and surprised at the nature of the package, glanced at the postmark on the brown paper which she had removed; it too was stamped Manitowoc. She cut the strings about the box and took off the cover. A black and brown dotted silk cloth filled the box; and, seeing it, Constance caught her breath. It was — at least it was very like — the muffler which Uncle Benny used to wear in winter. Remembering him most vividly as she had seen him last, that stormy afternoon when he had wandered beside the lake, carrying his coat until she made him put it on, she recalled this silk cloth, or one just like it, in his coat pocket; she had taken it from his pocket and put it around his neck.

She started with trembling fingers to take it from

the box; then, realizing from the weight of the package that the cloth was only a wrapping or, at least, that other things were in the box, she hesitated and looked around for her mother. But her mother had gone out; her father and Henry both were in Chicago; she was alone in the big summer "cottage," except for servants. Constance picked up box and wrapping and ran up to her room. She locked the door and put the box upon the bed; now she lifted out the cloth. It was a wrapping, for the heavier things came with it; and now, also, it revealed itself plainly as the scarf — Uncle Benny's scarf! A paper fluttered out as she began to unroll it — a little cross-lined leaf evidently torn from a pocket memorandum book. It had been folded and rolled up. She spread it out; writing was upon it, the small irregular letters of Uncle Benny's hand.

"Send to Alan Conrad," she read; there followed a Chicago address — the number of Uncle Benny's house on Astor Street. Below this was another line:

"Better care of Constance Sherrill (Miss)." There followed the Sherrills' address upon the Drive. And to this was another correction:

"Not after June 12th; then to Harbor Springs, Mich. Ask some one of that; be sure the date; after June 12th."

Constance, trembling, unrolled the scarf; now coins showed from a fold, next a pocket knife, ruined and rusty, next a watch — a man's large gold watch with the case queerly pitted and worn completely through in places, and last a plain little band of gold of the size for a woman's finger — a wedding ring. Constance, gasping and with fingers shaking so from excitement

that she could scarcely hold these objects, picked them up and examined them — the ring first.

It very evidently was, as she had immediately thought, a wedding ring once fitted for a finger only a trifle less slender than her own. One side of the gold band was very much worn, not with the sort of wear which a ring gets on a hand, but by some different sort of abrasion. The other side of the band was roughened and pitted but not so much worn; the inside still bore the traces of an inscription. "As long as we bo . . . all live," Constance could read, and the date "June 2, 1891."

It was in January, 1896, Constance remembered, that Alan Conrad had been brought to the people in Kansas; he then was "about three years old." If this wedding ring was his mother's, the date would be about right; it was a date probably something more than a year before Alan was born. Constance put down the ring and picked up the watch. Wherever it had lain, it had been less protected than the ring; the covers of the case had been almost eroded away, and whatever initialing or other marks there might have been upon the outside were gone. But it was like Uncle Benny's watch — or like one of his watches. He had several, she knew, presented to him at various times— watches almost always were the testimonials given to seamen for acts of sacrifice and bravery. She remembered finding some of those testimonials in a drawer at his house once where she was rummaging, when she was a child. One of them had been a watch just like this, large and heavy. The spring which operated the cover would not work, but Constance forced the cover open.

There, inside the cover as she had thought it would

be, was engraved writing. Sand had seeped into the case; the inscription was obliterated in part.

"For his courage and skill in seam . . . master of . . . which he brought to the rescue of the passengers and crew of the steamer *Winnebago* foundering . . . Point, Lake Erie, November 26th, 1890, this watch is donated by the Buffalo Merchants' Exchange."

Uncle Benny's name, evidently, had been engraved upon the outside. Constance could not particularly remember the rescue of the people of the *Winnebago;* 1890 was years before she was born, and Uncle Benny did not tell her that sort of thing about himself.

The watch, she saw now, must have lain in water, for the hands under the crystal were rusted away and the face was all streaked and cracked. She opened the back of the watch and exposed the works; they too were rusted and filled with sand. Constance left the watch open and, shivering a little, she gently laid it down upon her bed. The pocket knife had no distinguishing mark of any sort; it was just a man's ordinary knife with the steel turned to rust and with sand in it too. The coins were abraded and pitted discs — a silver dollar, a half dollar and three quarters, not so much abraded, three nickels, and two pennies.

Constance choked, and her eyes filled with tears. These things — plainly they were the things found in Uncle Benny's pockets — corroborated only too fully what Wassaquam believed and what her father had been coming to believe — that Uncle Benny was dead. The muffler and the scrap of paper had not been in water or in sand. The paper was written in pencil; it had not even been moistened or it would have blurred.

There was nothing upon it to tell how long ago it had been written; but it had been written certainly before June twelfth. "After June 12th," it said.

That day was August the eighteenth.

It was seven months since Uncle Benny had gone away. After his strange interview with her that day and his going home, had Uncle Benny gone out directly to his death? There was nothing to show that he had not; the watch and coins must have lain for many weeks, for months, in water and in sand to become eroded in this way. But, aside from this, there was nothing that could be inferred regarding the time or place of Uncle Benny's death. That the package had been mailed from Manitowoc meant nothing definite. Some one — Constance could not know whom — had had the muffler and the scrawled leaf of directions; later, after lying in water and in sand, the things which were to be "sent" had come to that some one's hand. Most probably this some one had been one who was going about on ships; when his ship had touched at Manitowoc, he had executed his charge.

Constance left the articles upon the bed and threw the window more widely open. She trembled and felt stirred and faint, as she leaned against the window, breathing deeply the warm air, full of life and with the scent of the evergreen trees about the house.

The "cottage" of some twenty rooms stood among the pines and hemlocks interspersed with hardwood on "the Point," where were the great fine summer homes of the wealthier "resorters." White, narrow roads, just wide enough for two automobiles to pass abreast, wound like a labyrinth among the tree trunks; and the sound of the wind among the pine needles was mingled

with the soft lapping of water. To south and east from her stretched Little Traverse — one of the most beautiful bits of water of the lakes; across from her, beyond the wrinkling water of the bay, the larger town — Petoskey — with its hilly streets pitching down steeply to the water's edge and the docks, and with its great resort hotels, was plainly visible. To westward, from the white life-saving station and the lighthouse, the point ran out in shingle, bone white, outcropping above the water; then for miles away the shallow water was treacherous green and white to where at the north, around the bend of the shore, it deepened and grew blue again, and a single white tower — Ile-aux-Galets Light — kept watch above it.

This was Uncle Benny's country. Here, twenty-five years before, he had first met Henry, whose birthplace — a farm, deserted now — was only a few miles back among the hills. Here, before that, Uncle Benny had been a young man, active, vigorous, ambitious. He had loved this country for itself and for its traditions, its Indian legends and fantastic stories. Half her own love for it — and, since her childhood, it had been to her a region of delight — was due to him and to the things he had told her about it. Distinct and definite memories of that companionship came to her. This little bay, which had become now for the most part only a summer playground for such as she, had been once a place where he and other men had struggled to grow rich swiftly; he had outlined for her the ruined lumber docks and pointed out to her the locations of the dismantled sawmills. It was he who had told her the names of the freighters passing far out, and the names of the lighthouses, and something about each.

He had told her too about the Indians. She remembered one starry night when he had pointed out to her in the sky the Indian "Way of Ghosts," the Milky Way, along which, by ancient Indian belief, the souls of Indians traveled up to heaven; and how, later, lying on the recessed seat beside the fireplace where she could touch the dogs upon the hearth, he had pointed out to her through the window the Indian "Way of Dogs" among the constellations, by which the dogs too could make that journey. It was he who had told her about Michabou and the animals; and he had been the first to tell her of the Drum.

The disgrace, unhappiness, the threat of something worse, which must have made death a relief to Uncle Benny, she had seen passed on now to Alan. What more had come to Alan since she had last heard of him? Some terrible substance to his fancies which would assail him again as she had seen him assailed after Luke had come? Might another attack have been made upon him similar to that which he had met in Chicago?

Word had reached her father through shipping circles in May and again in July which told of inquiries regarding Uncle Benny which made her and her father believe that Alan was searching for his father upon the lakes. Now these articles which had arrived made plain to her that he would never find Uncle Benny; he would learn, through others or through themselves, that Uncle Benny was dead. Would he believe then that there was no longer any chance of learning what his father had done? Would he remain away because of that, not letting her see or hear from him again?

She went back and picked up the wedding ring.

The thought which had come to her that this was Alan's mother's wedding ring, had fastened itself upon her with a sense of certainty. It defended that unknown mother; it freed her, at least, from the stigma which Constance's own mother had been so ready to cast. Constance could not yet begin to place Uncle Benny in relation to that ring; but she was beginning to be able to think of Alan and his mother. She held the little band of gold very tenderly in her hand; she was glad that, as the accusation against his mother had come through her people, she could tell him soon of this. She could not send the ring to him, not knowing where he was; that was too much risk. But she could ask him to come to her; this gave that right.

She sat thoughtful for several minutes, the ring clasped warmly in her hand; then she went to her desk and wrote:

Mr. John Welton,
Blue Rapids, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Welton:

It is possible that Alan Conrad has mentioned me — or at least told you of my father — in connection with his stay in Chicago. After Alan left Chicago, my father wrote twice to his Blue Rapids address, but evidently he had instructed the postmaster there to forward his mail and had not made any change in those instructions, for the letters were returned to Alan's address and in that way came back to us. We did not like to press inquiries further than that, as of course he could have communicated with us if he had not felt that there was some reason for not doing so. Now, however, something of such supreme importance to him

has come to us that it is necessary for us to get word to him at once. If you can tell me any address at which he can be reached by telegraph or mail — or where a messenger can find him — it will oblige us very much and will be to his interest.

She hesitated, about to sign it; then, impulsively, she added:

I trust you know that we have Alan's interest at heart and that you can safely tell us anything you may know as to where he is or what he may be doing. We all liked him here so very much. . . .

She signed her name. There were still two other letters to write. Only the handwriting of the address upon the package, the Manitowoc postmark and the shoe box furnished clue to the sender of the ring and the watch and the other things. Constance herself could not trace those clues, but Henry or her father could. She wrote to both of them, therefore, describing the articles which had come and relating what she had done. Then she rang for a servant and sent the letters to the post. They were in time to catch the "dummy" train around the bay and, at Petoskey, would get into the afternoon mail. The two for Chicago would be delivered early the next morning, so she could expect replies from Henry and her father on the second day; the letter to Kansas, of course, would take much longer than that.

But the next noon she received a wire from Henry that he was "coming up." It did not surprise her, as she had expected him the end of the week.

Late that evening, she sat with her mother on the wide, screened veranda. The breeze among the pines

had died away; the lake was calm. A half moon hung midway in the sky, making plain the hills about the bay and casting a broadening way of silver on the mirror surface of the water. The lights of some boat turning in between the points and moving swiftly caught her attention. As it entered the path of the moonlight, its look was so like that of Henry's power yacht that she arose. She had not expected him until morning; but now the boat was so near that she could no longer doubt that it was his. He must have started within an hour of the receipt of her letter and had been forcing his engines to their fastest all the way up.

He had done that partly, perhaps, for the sheer sport of speed; but partly also for the sake of being sooner with her. It was his way, as soon as he had decided to leave business again and go to her, to arrive as soon as possible; that had been his way recently, particularly. So the sight of the yacht stirred her warmly and she watched while it ran in close, stopped and instantly dropped a dingey from the davits. She saw Henry in the stern of the little boat; it disappeared in the shadow of a pier . . . she heard, presently, the gravel of the walk crunch under his quick steps, and then she saw him in the moonlight among the trees. The impetuousness, almost the violence of his hurry to reach her, sent its thrill through her. She went down on the path to meet him.

"How quickly you came!"

"You let yourself think you needed me, Connie!"

"I did. . . "

He had caught her hand in his and he held it while he brought her to the porch and exchanged greetings

with her mother. Then he led her on past and into the house.

When she saw his face in the light, there were signs of strain in it; she could feel strain now in his fingers which held hers strongly but tensely too.

"You're tired, Henry!"

He shook his head. "It's been rotten hot in Chicago; then I guess I was mentally stoking all the way up here, Connie. When I got started, I wanted to see you to-night . . . but first, where are the things you wanted me to see?"

She ran up-stairs and brought them down to him. Her hands were shaking now as she gave them to him; she could not exactly understand why; but her tremor increased as she saw his big hands fumbling as he unwrapped the muffler and shook out the things it enclosed. He took them up one by one and looked at them, as she had done. His fingers were steady now but only by mastering of control, the effort for which amazed her.

He had the watch in his hands.

"The inscription is inside the front," she said.

She pried the cover open again and read, with him, the words engraved within.

"'As master of . . .' What ship was he master of then, Henry, and how did he rescue the *Winnebago's* people?"

"He never talked to me about things like that, Connie. This is all?"

"Yes."

"And nothing since to show who sent them?"

"No."

"Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman will send some one

to Manitowoc to make inquiries." Henry put the things back in the box. "But of course, this is the end of Benjamin Corvet."

"Of course," Constance said. She was shaking again and, without willing it, she withdrew a little from Henry. He caught her hand again and drew her back toward him. His hand was quite steady.

"You know why I came to you as quick as I could? You know why I — why my mind was behind every thrust of the engines?"

"No."

"You don't? Oh, you know; you must know now!"

"Yes, Henry," she said.

"I've been patient, Connie. Till I got your letter telling me this about Ben, I'd waited for your sake — for our sakes — though it seemed at times it was impossible. You haven't known quite what's been the matter between us these last months, little girl; but I've known. We've been engaged; but that's about all there's been to it. Don't think I make little of that; you know what I mean. You've been mine; but — but you haven't let me realize it, you see. And I've been patient, for I knew the reason. It was Ben poisoning your mind against me."

"No! No, Henry!"

"You've denied it; I've recognized that you've denied it, not only to me and to your people but to yourself. I, of course, knew, as I know that I am here with your hand in mine, and as we will stand before the altar together, that he had no cause to speak against me. I've waited, Connie, to give him a chance to say to you what he had to say; I wanted you to hear it before making you wholly mine. But now there's no need to

wait any longer, you and I. Ben's gone, never to come back. I was sure of that by what you wrote me, so this time when I started to you I brought with me — this."

He felt in his pocket and brought out a ring of plain gold; he held it before her so that she could see within it her own initials and his and a blank left for the date. Her gaze went from it for an instant to the box where he had put back the other ring — Alan's mother's. Feeling for her long ago gazing thus, as she must have, at that ring, held her for a moment. Was it because of that that Constance found herself cold now?

"You mean you want me to marry you — at once, Henry?"

He drew her to him powerfully; she felt him warm, almost rough with passions. Since that day when, in Alan Conrad's presence, he had grasped and kissed her, she had not let him "realize" their engagement, as he had put it.

"Why not?" he turned her face up to his now. "Your mother's here; your father will follow soon; or, if you will, we'll run away — Constance! You've kept me off so long! You don't believe there's anything against me, dear? Do you? Do you?

"No; no! Of course not!"

"Then we're going to be married. . . . We're going to be married, aren't we? Aren't we, Constance?"

"Yes; yes, of course."

"Right away, we'll have it then; up here; now!"

"No; not now, Henry. Not up here!"

"Not here? Why not?"

She could give no answer. He held her and com-

manded her again; only when he frightened her, he ceased.

"Why *must* it be at once, Henry? I don't understand!"

"It's not must, dear," he denied. "It's just that I want you so!"

When would it be, he demanded then; before spring, she promised at last. But that was all he could make her say. And so he let her go.

The next evening, in the moonlight, she drove him to Petoskey. He had messages to send and preferred to trust the telegraph office in the larger town. Returning they swung out along the country roads. The night was cool here on the hills, under the stars; the fan-shaped glare from their headlights, blurring the radiance of the moon, sent dancing before them swiftly-changing, distorted shadows of the dusty bushes beside the road. Topping a rise, they came suddenly upon his birthplace. She had not designed coming to that place, but she had taken a turn at his direction, and now he asked her to stop the car. He got out and paced about, calling to her and pointing out the desirableness of the spot as the site for their country home. She sat in the motor, watching him and calling back to him.

The house was small, log built, the chinks between the logs stopped with clay. Across the road from it, the silver bark of the birch trees gleamed white among the black-barked timber. Smells of rank vegetation came to her from these woods and from the weed-grown fields about and beyond the house. There had been a small garden beside the house once; now neglected strawberry vines ran riot among the weed stems, and a

clump of sunflowers stood with hanging, full-blown heads under the August moon.

She gazed proudly at Henry's strong, well proportioned figure moving about in the moonlight, and she was glad to think that a boy from this house had become the man that he was. But when she tried to think of him as a child here, her mind somehow showed her Alan playing about the sunflowers; and the place was not here; it was the brown, Kansas prairie of which he had told her.

"Sunflower houses," she murmured to herself. "Sunflower houses. They used to cut the stalks and build shacks with them."

"What's that?" Henry said; he had come back near her.

The warm blood rushed to her face. "Nothing," she said, a little ashamed. She opened the door beside her. "Come; we'll go back home now."

Coming from that poor little place, and having made of himself what he had, Henry was such a man as she would be ever proud to have for a husband; there was no man whom she had known who had proved himself as much a man as he. Yet now, as she returned to the point, she was thinking of this lake country not only as Henry's land but as Alan Conrad's too. In some such place he also had been born — born by the mother whose ring waited him in the box in her room.

Alan, upon the morning of the second of these days, was driving northward along the long, sandy peninsula which separates the blue waters of Grand Traverse from Lake Michigan; and, thinking of her, he knew that she was near. He not only had remembered that she would be north at Harbor Point this

month; he had seen in one of the Petoskey papers that she and her mother were at the Sherrill summer home. His business now was taking him nearer them than he had been at any time before; and, if he wished to weaken, he might convince himself that he might learn from her circumstances which would aid him in his task. But he was not going to her for help; that was following in his father's footsteps. When he knew everything, then — not till then — he could go to her; for then he would know exactly what was upon him and what he should do.

His visits to the people named on those sheets written by his father had been confusing at first; he had had great difficulty in tracing some of them at all; and, afterwards, he could uncover no certain connection either between them and Benjamin Corvet or between themselves. But recently, he had been succeeding better in this latter.

He had seen — he reckoned them over again — fourteen of the twenty-one named originally on Benjamin Corvet's lists; that is, he had seen either the individual originally named, or the surviving relative written in below the name crossed off. He had found that the crossing out of the name meant that the person was dead, except in the case of two who had left the country and whose whereabouts were as unknown to their present relatives as they had been to Benjamin Corvet, and the case of one other, who was in an insane asylum.

He had found that no one of the persons whom he saw had known Benjamin Corvet personally; many of them did not know him at all, the others knew him only as a name. But, when Alan proceeded, always there was one connotation with each of the original names;

always one circumstance bound all together. When he had established that circumstance as influencing the fortunes of the first two on his lists, he had said to himself, as the blood pricked queerly under the skin, that the fact might be a mere coincidence. When he established it also as affecting the fate of the third and of the fourth and of the fifth, such explanation no longer sufficed; and he found it in common to all fourteen, sometimes as the deciding factor of their fate, sometimes as only slightly affecting them, but always it was there.

In how many different ways, in what strange, diverse manifestations that single circumstance had spread to those people whom Alan had interviewed! No two of them had been affected alike, he reckoned, as he went over his notes of them. Now he was going to trace those consequences to another. To what sort of place would it bring him to-day and what would he find there? He knew only that it would be quite distinct from the rest.

The driver beside whom he sat on the front seat of the little automobile was an Indian; an Indian woman and two round-faced silent children occupied the seat behind. He had met these people in the early morning on the road, bound, he discovered, to the annual camp meeting of the Methodist Indians at Northport. They were going his way, and they knew the man of whom he was in search; so he had hired a ride of them. The region through which they were traveling now was of farms, but interspersed with desolate, waste fields where blackened stumps and rotting windfalls remained after the work of the lumberers. The hills and many of the hollows were wooded; there were even places where lumbering was still going on. To his left across

the water, the twin Manitous broke the horizon, high and round and blue with haze. To his right, from the higher hilltops, he caught glimpses of Grand Traverse and of the shores to the north, rising higher, dimmer, and more blue, where they broke for Little Traverse and where Constance Sherrill was, two hours away across the water; but he had shut his mind to that thought.

The driver turned now into a rougher road, bearing more to the east.

They passed people more frequently now — groups in farm wagons, or groups or single individuals, walking beside the road. All were going in the same direction as themselves, and nearly all were Indians, drab dressed figures attired obviously in their best clothes. Some walked barefoot, carrying new shoes in their hands, evidently to preserve them from the dust. They saluted gravely Alan's driver, who returned their salutes — "B'jou!" "B'jou!"

Traveling eastward, they had lost sight of Lake Michigan; and suddenly the wrinkled blueness of Grand Traverse appeared quite close to them. The driver turned aside from the road across a cleared field where ruts showed the passing of many previous vehicles; crossing this, they entered the woods. Little fires for cooking burned all about them, and nearer were parked an immense number of farm wagons and buggies, with horses unharnessed and munching grain. Alan's guide found a place among these for his automobile, and they got out and went forward on foot. All about them, seated upon the moss or walking about, were Indians, family groups among which children played. A platform had been built under the trees; on it some thirty

Indians, all men, sat in straight-backed chairs; in front of and to the sides of the platform, an audience of several hundred occupied benches, and around the borders of the meeting others were gathered, merely observing. A very old Indian, with inordinately wrinkled skin and dressed in a frock coat, was addressing these people from the platform in the Indian tongue.

Alan halted beside his guide. He saw among the drab-clad figures looking on, the brighter dresses and sport coats of summer visitors who had come to watch. The figure of a girl among these caught his attention, and he started; then swiftly he told himself that it was only his thinking of Constance Sherrill that made him believe this was she. But now she had seen him; she paled, then as quickly flushed, and leaving the group she had been with, came toward him.

He had no choice now whether he would avoid her or not; and his happiness at seeing her held him stupid, watching her. Her eyes were very bright and with something more than friendly greeting; there was happiness in them too. His throat shut together as he recognized this, and his hand closed warmly over the small, trembling hand which she put out to him. All his conscious thought was lost for the moment in the mere realization of her presence; he stood, holding her hand, oblivious that there were people looking; she too seemed careless of that. Then she whitened again and withdrew her hand; she seemed slightly confused. He was confused as well; it was not like this that he had meant to greet her; he caught himself together.

Cap in hand, he stood beside her, trying to look and to feel as any ordinary acquaintance of hers would have looked.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OWNER OF THE WATCH

"SO they got word to you!" Constance exclaimed; she seemed still confused. "Oh, no — of course they couldn't have done that! They've hardly got my letter yet."

"Your letter?" Alan asked.

"I wrote to Blue Rapids," she explained. "Some things came — they were sent to me. Some things of Uncle Benny's which were meant for you instead of me."

"You mean you've heard from him?"

"No — not that."

"What things, Miss Sherrill?"

"A watch of his and some coins and — a ring." She did not explain the significance of those things, and he could not tell from her mere enumeration of them and without seeing them that they furnished proof that his father was dead. She could not inform him of that, she felt, just here and now.

"I'll tell you about that later. You — you were coming to Harbor Point to see us?"

He colored. "I'm afraid not. I got as near as this to you because there is a man — an Indian — I have to see."

"An Indian? What is his name? You see, I know quite a lot of them."

"Jo Papo."

She shook her head. "No; I don't know him."

She had drawn him a little away from the crowd about the meeting. His blood was beating hard with recognition of her manner toward him. Whatever he was, whatever the disgrace might be that his father had left to him, she was still resolute to share in it. He had known she would be so. She found a spot where the moss was covered with dry pine needles and sat down upon the ground.

"Sit down," she invited; "I want you to tell me what you have been doing."

"I've been on the boats." He dropped down upon the moss beside her. "It's a — wonderful business, Miss Sherrill; I'll never be able to go away from the water again. I've been working rather hard at my new profession — studying it, I mean. Until yesterday I was a not very highly honored member of the crew of the package freighter *Oscoda;* I left her at Frankfort and came up here."

"Is Wassaquam with you?"

"He wasn't on the *Oscoda;* but he was with me at first. Now, I believe, he has gone back to his own people — to Middle Village."

"You mean you've been looking for Mr. Corvet in that way?"

"Not exactly that." He hesitated; but he could see no reason for not telling what he had been doing. He had not so much hidden from her and her father what he had found in Benjamin Corvet's house; rather, he had refrained from mentioning it in his notes to them when he left Chicago because he had thought that the lists would lead to an immediate explanation; they had

not led to that, but only to a suggestion, indefinite as yet. He had known that, if his search finally developed nothing more than it had, he must at last consult Sherrill and get Sherrill's aid.

"We found some writing, Miss Sherrill," he said, "in the house on Astor Street that night after Luke came."

"What writing?"

He took the lists from his pocket and showed them to her. She separated and looked through the sheets and read the names written in the same hand that had written the directions upon the slip of paper that came to her four days before, with the things from Uncle Benny's pockets.

"My father had kept these very secretly," he explained. "He had them hidden. Wassaquam knew where they were, and that night after Luke was dead and you had gone home, he gave them to me."

"After I had gone home? Henry went back to see you that night; he had said he was going back, and afterwards I asked him, and he told me he had seen you again. Did you show him these?"

"He saw them — yes."

"He was there when Wassaquam showed you where they were?"

"Yes."

A little line deepened between her brows, and she sat thoughtful.

"So you have been going about seeing these people," she said. "What have you found out?"

"Nothing definite at all. None of them knew my father; they were only amazed to find that any one in Chicago had known their names."

She got up suddenly. "You don't mind if I am with you when you talk with this Indian?"

He arose and looked around for the guide who had brought him. His guide had been standing near, evidently waiting until Alan's attention was turned his way; he gestured now toward a man, a woman, and several children who were lunching, seated about a basket on the ground. The man — thin, patient and of medium size — was of the indefinite age of the Indian, neither young nor yet old. It was evident that life had been hard for the man; he looked worn and undernourished; his clothing was the cast-off suit of some one much larger which had been inexpertly altered to make it fit him. As Alan and Constance approached them, the group turned on them their dark, inexpressive eyes, and the woman got up, but the man remained seated on the ground.

"I'm looking for Jo Papo," Alan explained.

"What you want?" the squaw asked. "You got work?" The words were pronounced with difficulty and evidently composed most of her English vocabulary.

"I want to see him, that's all." Alan turned to the man. "You're Jo Papo, aren't you?"

The Indian assented by an almost imperceptible nod.

"You used to live near Escanaba, didn't you?"

Jo Papo considered before replying; either his scrutiny of Alan reassured him, or he recalled nothing having to do with his residence near Escanaba which disturbed him. "Yes; once," he said.

"Your father was Azen Papo?"

"He's dead," the Indian replied. "Not my

father, anyway. Grandfather. What about him?"

"That's what I want to ask you," Alan said. "When did he die and how?"

Jo Papo got up and stood leaning his back against a tree. So far from being one who was merely curious about Indians, this stranger perhaps was coming about an Indian claim — to give money maybe for injustices done in the past.

"My grandfather die fifteen years ago," he informed them. "From cough, I think."

"Where was that?" Alan asked.

"Escanaba — near there."

"What did he do?"

"Take people to shoot deer — fish — a guide. I think he plant a little too."

"He didn't work on the boats?"

"No; my father, he work on the boats."

"What was his name?"

"Like me; Jo Papo too. He's dead."

"What is your Indian name?"

"Flying Eagle."

"What boats did your father work on?"

"Many boats."

"What did he do?"

"Deck hand."

"What boat did he work on last?"

"Last? How do I know? He went away one year and didn't come back? I suppose he was drowned from a boat."

"What year was that?"

"I was little then; I do not know."

"How old were you?"

"Maybe eight years; maybe nine or ten."

"How old are you now?"

"Thirty, maybe."

"Did you ever hear of Benjamin Corvet?"

"Who?"

"Benjamin Corvet."

"No."

Alan turned to Constance; she had been listening intently, but she made no comment. "That is all, then," he said to Papo; "if I find out anything to your advantage, I'll let you know." He had aroused, he understood, expectations of benefit in these poor Indians. Something rose in Alan's throat and choked him. Those of whom Benjamin Corvet had so laboriously kept trace were, very many of them, of the sort of these Indians; that they had never heard of Benjamin Corvet was not more significant than that they were people of whose existence Benjamin Corvet could not have been expected to be aware. What conceivable bond could there have been between Alan's father and such poor people as these? Had his father wronged these people? Had he owed them something? This thought, which had been growing stronger with each succeeding step of Alan's investigations, chilled and horrified him now. Revolt against his father more active than ever before seized him, revolt stirring stronger with each recollection of his interviews with the people upon his list. As they walked away, Constance appreciated that he was feeling something deeply; she too was stirred.

"They all — all I have talked to — are like that," he said to her. "They all have lost some one upon the lakes."

In her feeling for him, she had laid her hand upon

his arm; now her fingers tightened to sudden tenseness. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Oh, it is not definite yet — not clear!" She felt the bitterness in his tone. "They have not any of them been able to make it wholly clear to me. It is like a record that has been — blurred. These original names must have been written down by my father many years ago — many, most of those people, I think — are dead; some are nearly forgotten. The only thing that is fully plain is that in every case my inquiries have led me to those who have lost one, and sometimes more than one relative upon the lakes."

Constance thrilled to a vague horror; it was not anything to which she could give definite reason. His tone quite as much as what he said was its cause. His experience plainly had been forcing him to bitterness against his father; and he did not know with certainty yet that his father was dead.

She had not found it possible to tell him that yet; now consciously she deferred telling him until she could take him to her home and show him what had come. The shrill whistling of the power yacht in which she and her party had come recalled to her that all were to return to the yacht for luncheon, and that they must be waiting for her.

"You'll lunch with us, of course," she said to Alan, "and then go back with us to Harbor Point. It's a day's journey around the two bays; but we've a boat here."

He assented, and they went down to the water where the white and brown power yacht, with long, graceful lines, lay somnolently in the sunlight. A little boat took them out over the shimmering, smooth surface to

the ship; swells from a faraway freighter swept under the beautiful, burnished craft, causing it to roll lazily as they boarded it. A party of nearly a dozen men and girls, with an older woman chaperoning them, lounged under the shade of an awning over the after deck. They greeted her gaily and looked curiously at Alan as she introduced him.

As he returned their rather formal acknowledgments and afterward fell into general conversation with them, she became for the first time fully aware of how greatly he had changed from what he had been when he had come to them six months before in Chicago. These gay, wealthy loungers would have dismayed him then, and he would have been equally dismayed by the luxury of the carefully appointed yacht; now he was not thinking at all about what these people might think of him. In return, they granted him consideration. It was not, she saw that they accepted him as one of their own sort, or as some ordinary acquaintance of hers; if they accounted for him to themselves at all, they must believe him to be some officer employed upon her father's ships. He looked like that — with his face darkened and reddened by the summer sun and in his clothing like that of a ship's officer ashore. He had not weakened under the disgrace which Benjamin Corvet had left to him, whatever that might be; he had grown stronger facing it. A lump rose in her throat as she realized that the lakes had been setting their seal upon him, as upon the man whose strength and resourcefulness she loved.

"Have you worked on any of our boats?" she asked him, after luncheon had been finished, and the anchor of the ship had been raised.

A queer expression came upon his face. "I've thought it best not to do that, Miss Sherrill," he replied.

She did not know why the next moment she should think of Henry.

"Henry was going to bring us over in his yacht — the *Chippewa*," she said. "But he was called away suddenly yesterday on business to St. Ignace and used his boat to go over there."

"He's at Harbor Point, then."

"He got there a couple of nights ago and will be back again to-night or to-morrow morning."

The yacht was pushing swiftly, smoothly, with hardly a hum from its motors, north along the shore. He watched intently the rolling, wooded hills and the ragged little bays and inlets. His work and his investigatings had not brought him into the neighborhood before, but she found that she did not have to name the places to him; he knew them from the charts.

"Grand Traverse Light," he said to her as a white tower showed upon their left. Then, leaving the shore, they pushed out across the wide mouth of the larger bay toward Little Traverse. He grew more silent as they approached it.

"It is up there, isn't it," he asked, pointing, "that they hear the Drum?"

"Yes; how did you know the place?"

"I don't know it exactly; I want you to show me."

She pointed out to him the copse, dark, primeval, blue in its contrast with the lighter green of the trees about it and the glistening white of the shingle and of the more distant sand bluffs. He leaned forward, staring at it, until the changed course of the yacht, as

it swung about toward the entrance to the bay, obscured it. They were meeting other power boats now of their yacht's own size and many smaller; they passed white-sailed sloops and cat-boats, almost becalmed, with girls and boys diving from their sides and swimming about. As they neared the Point, a panorama of play such as, she knew, he scarcely could have seen before, was spread in front of them. The sun gleamed back from the white sides and varnished decks and shining brasswork of a score or more of cruising yachts and many smaller vessels lying in the anchorage.

"The Chicago to Mackinac yacht race starts this week, and the cruiser fleet is working north to be in at the finish," she offered. Then she saw he was not looking at these things; he was studying with a strange expression the dark, uneven hills which shut in the two towns and the bay.

"You remember how the ship rhymes you told me and that about Michabou and seeing the ships made me feel that I belonged here on the lakes," he reminded her. "I have felt something — not recognition exactly, but something that was like the beginning of recognition — many times this summer when I saw certain places. It's like one of those dreams, you know, in which you are conscious of having had the same dream before. I feel that I ought to know this place."

They landed only a few hundred yards from the cottage. After bidding good-by to her friends, they went up to it together through the trees. There was a small sun room, rather shut off from the rest of the house, to which she led him. Leaving him there, she ran upstairs to get the things.

She halted an instant beside the door, with the box in her hands, before she went back to him, thinking how to prepare him against the significance of these relics of his father. She need not prepare him against the mere fact of his father's death; he had been beginning to believe that already; but these things must have far more meaning for him than merely that. They must frustrate one course of inquiry for him at the same time they opened another; they would close for him forever the possibility of ever learning anything about himself from his father; they would introduce into his problem some new, some unknown person — the sender of these things.

She went in and put the box down upon the card table.

"The muffler in the box was your father's," she told him. "He had it on the day he disappeared. The other things," her voice choked a little, "are the things he must have had in his pockets. They've been lying in water and sand —"

He gazed at her. "I understand," he said after an instant. "You mean that they prove his death."

She assented gently, without speaking. As he approached the box, she drew back from it and slipped away into the next room. She walked up and down there, pressing her hands together. He must be looking at the things now, unrolling the muffler. . . . What would he be feeling as he saw them? Would he be glad, with that same gladness which had mingled with her own sorrow over Uncle Benny, that his father was gone — gone from his guilt and his fear and his disgrace? Or would he resent that death which thus left everything unexplained to him? He would be looking at the

ring. That, at least, must bring more joy than grief to him. He would recognize that it must be his mother's wedding ring; if it told him that his mother must be dead, it would tell him that she had been married, or had believed that she was married!

Suddenly she heard him calling her. "Miss Sherrill!" His voice had a sharp thrill of excitement.

She hurried toward the sun room. She could see him through the doorway, bending over the card table with the things spread out upon its top in front of him.

"Miss Sherrill!" he called again.

"Yes."

He straightened; he was very pale. "Would coins that my father had in his pocket all have been more than twenty years old?"

She ran and bent beside him over the coins. "Twenty years!" she repeated. She was making out the dates of the coins now herself; the markings were eroded, nearly gone in some instances, but in every case enough remained to make plain the date. "Eighteen-ninety — 1893 — 1889," she made them out. Her voice hushed queerly. "What does it mean?" she whispered.

He turned over and reëxamined the articles with hands suddenly steadying. "There are two sets of things here," he concluded. "The muffler and paper of directions — they belonged to my father. The other things — it isn't six months or less than six months that they've lain in sand and water to become worn like this; it's twenty years. My father can't have had these things; they were somewhere else, or some one else had them. He wrote his directions to that person —

after June twelfth, he said, so it was before June twelfth he wrote it; but we can't tell how long before. It might have been in February, when he disappeared; it might have been any time after that. But if the directions were written so long ago, why weren't the things sent to you before this? Didn't the person have the things then? Did we have to wait to get them? Or — was it the instructions to send them that he didn't have? Or, if he had the instructions, was he waiting to receive word when they were to be sent?"

"To receive word?" she echoed.

"Word from my father! You thought these things proved my father was dead. I think they prove he is alive! Oh, we must think this out!"

He paced up and down the room; she sank into a chair, watching him. "The first thing that we must do," he said suddenly, "is to find out about the watch. What is the 'phone number of the telegraph office?"

She told him, and he went out to the telephone; she sprang up to follow him, but checked herself and merely waited until he came back.

"I've wired to Buffalo," he announced. "The Merchants' Exchange, if it is still in existence, must have a record of the presentation of the watch. At any rate, the wreck of the *Winnebago* and the name of the skipper of the other boat must be in the files of the newspapers of that time."

"Then you'll stay here with us until an answer comes."

"If we get a reply by to-morrow morning; I'll wait till then. If not, I'll ask you to forward it to me. I must see about the trains and get back to Frankfort. I can cross by boat from there to Manitowoc — that

will be quickest. We must begin there, by trying to find out who sent the package."

"Henry Spearman's already sent to have that investigated."

Alan made no reply; but she saw his lips draw tighter quickly. "I must go myself as soon as I can," he said, after a moment.

She helped him put the muffler and the other articles back into the box; she noticed that the wedding ring was no longer with them. He had taken that, then; it had meant to him all that she had known it must mean. . . .

In the morning she was up very early; but Alan, the servants told her, had risen before she had and had gone out. The morning, after the cool northern night, was chill. She slipped a sweater on and went out on the veranda, loking about for him. An iridescent haze shrouded the hills and the bay; in it she heard a ship's bell strike twice; then another struck twice — then another — and another — and another. The haze thinned as the sun grew warmer, showing the placid water of the bay on which the ships stood double — a real ship and a mirrored one. She saw Alan returning, and knowing from the direction from which he came that he must have been to the telegraph office, she ran to meet him.

"Was there an answer?" she inquired eagerly.

He took a yellow telegraph sheet from his pocket and held it for her to read.

"Watch presented Captain Caleb Stafford, master of propeller freighter *Marvin Halch* for rescue of crew and passengers of sinking steamer *Winnebago* off Long Point, Lake Erie."

She was breathing quickly in her excitement. "Caleb Stafford!" she exclaimed. "Why, that was Captain Stafford of Stafford and Ramsdell! They owned the *Miwaka!*"

"Yes," Alan said.

"You asked me about that ship — the *Miwaka* — that first morning at breakfast!"

"Yes."

A great change had come over him since last night; he was under emotion so strong that he seemed scarcely to dare to speak lest it master him — a leaping, exultant impulse it was, which he fought to keep down.

"What is it, Alan?" she asked. "What is it about the *Miwaka?* You said you'd found some reference to it in Uncle Benny's house. What was it? What did you find there?"

"The man —" Alan swallowed and steadied himself and repeated —"the man I met in the house that night mentioned it."

"The man who thought you were a ghost?"

"Yes."

"How — how did he mention it?"

"He seemed to think I was a ghost that had haunted Mr. Corvet — the ghost from the *Miwaka;* at least he shouted out to me that I couldn't save the *Miwaka!*"

"Save the *Miwaka!* What do you mean, Alan? The *Miwaka* was lost with all her people — officers and crew — no one knows how or where!"

"All except the one for whom the Drum didn't beat!"

"What's that?" Blood pricked in her cheeks. "What do you mean, Alan?"

"I don't know yet; but I think I'll soon find out!"

"No; you can tell me more now, Alan. Surely you can. I must know. I have the right to know. Yesterday, even before you found out about this, you knew things you weren't telling me — things about the people you'd been seeing. They'd all lost people on the lakes, you said; but you found out more than that."

"They'd all lost people on the *Miwaka!*" he said. "All who could tell me where their people were lost; a few were like Jo Papo we saw yesterday, who knew only the year his father was lost; but the time always was the time that the *Miwaka* disappeared!"

"Disappeared!" she repeated. Her veins were pricking cold. What did he know, what could any one know of the *Miwaka*, the ship of which nothing ever was heard except the beating of the Indian Drum? She tried to make him say more; but he looked away now down to the lake.

"The *Chippewa* must have come in early this morning," he said. "She's lying in the harbor; I saw her on my way to the telegraph office. If Mr. Spearman has come back with her, tell him I'm sorry I can't wait to see him."

"When are you going?"

"Now."

She offered to drive him to Petoskey, but he already had arranged for a man to take him to the train.

She went to her room after he was gone and spread out again on her bed the watch — now the watch of Captain Stafford of the *Miwaka* — with the knife and coins of more than twenty years ago which came with it. The meaning of them now was all changed; she felt that; but what the new meaning might be could not yet come to her. Something of it had come to Alan; that,

undoubtedly, was what had so greatly stirred him; but she could not yet reassemble her ideas. Yet a few facts had become plain.

A maid came to say that Mr. Spearman had come up from his boat for breakfast with her and was downstairs. She went down to find Henry lounging in one of the great wicker chairs in the living room. He arose and came toward her quickly; but she halted before he could seize her.

"I got back, Connie —"

"Yes; I heard you did."

"What's wrong, dear?"

"Alan Conrad has been here, Henry."

"He has? How was that?"

She told him while he watched her intently. "He wired to Buffalo about the watch. He got a reply which he brought to me half an hour ago."

"Yes?"

"The watch belonged to Captain Stafford who was lost with the *Miwaka*, Henry."

He made no reply; but waited.

"You may not have known that it was his; I mean, you may not have known that it was he who rescued the people of the *Winnebago*, but you must have known that Uncle Benny didn't."

"Yes; I knew that, Connie," he answered evenly.

"Then why did you let me think the watch was his and that he must be — dead?"

"That's all's the matter? You had thought he was dead. I believed it was better for you — for every one — to believe that."

She drew a little away from him, with hands clasped behind her back, gazing intently at him. "There was

some writing found in Uncle Benny's house in Astor Street — a list of names of relatives of people who had lost their lives upon the lake. Wassaquam knew where those things were. Alan says they were given to him in your presence."

She saw the blood rise darkly under his skin. "That is true, Connie."

"Why didn't you tell me about that?"

He straightened as if with anger. "Why should I? Because he thought that I should? What did he tell you about those lists?"

"I asked you, after you went back, if anything else had happened, Henry, and you said, 'nothing.' I should not have considered the finding of those lists 'nothing.'"

"Why not? What were they but names? What has he told you they were, Connie? What has he said to you?"

"Nothing — except that his father had kept them very secretly; but he's found out they were names of people who had relatives on the *Miwaka!*"

"What?"

Recalling how her blood had run when Alan had told her that, Henry's whiteness and the following suffusion of his face did not surprise her.

He turned away a moment and considered. "Where's Conrad now, Connie?"

"He's gone to Frankfort to cross to Manitowoc."

"To get deeper into that mess, I suppose. He'll only be sorry."

"Sorry?"

"I told that fellow long ago not to start stirring these matters up about Ben Corvet, and particularly I

told him that he was not to bring any of it to you. It's not — a thing that a man like Ben covered up for twenty years till it drove him crazy is sure not to be a thing for a girl to know. Conrad seems to have paid no attention to me. But I should think by this time he ought to begin to suspect what sort of thing he's going to turn up. I don't know; but I certainly suspect — Ben leaving everything to that boy, whom no one had heard of, and the sort of thing which has come up since. It's certainly not going to be anything pleasant for any of us, Connie — for you, or your father, or for me, or for anybody who'd cared for Ben, or had been associated with him. Least of all, I should say, would it prove anything pleasant for Conrad. Ben ran away from it, because he knew what it was; why doesn't this fellow let him stay away from it?"

"He — I mean Alan, Henry," she said, "isn't thinking about himself in this; he isn't thinking about his father. He believes — he is certain now — that, whatever his father did, he injured some one; and his idea in going ahead — he hasn't told it to me that way, but I know — is to find out the whole matter in order that he may make recompense. It's a terrible thing, whatever happened. He knows that, and I know; but he wants — and I want him for his sake, even for Uncle Benny's sake — to see it through."

"Then it's a queer concern you've got for Ben! Let it alone, I tell you."

She stood flushed and perplexed, gazing at him. She never had seen him under stronger emotion.

"You misunderstood me once, Connie!" he appealed. "You'll understand me now!"

She had been thinking about that injustice she had

done him in her thought — about his chivalry to his partner and former benefactor, when Uncle Benny was still keeping his place among men. Was Henry now moved, in a way which she could not understand, by some other obligation to the man who long ago had aided him? Had Henry hazarded more than he had told her of the nature of the thing hidden which, if she could guess it, would justify what he said?

In the confusion of her thought, one thing came clearly which troubled her and of which she could not speak. The watch of Captain Stafford's and the ring and the coins, which had made her believe that Uncle Benny was dead, had not been proof of that to Henry. Yet he had taken advantage of her belief, without undeceiving her, to urge her to marry him at once.

She knew of the ruthlessness of Henry's business life; he had forced down, overcome all who opposed him, and he had made full use for his own advantage of other men's mistakes and erroneous beliefs and opinions. If he had used her belief in Uncle Benny's death to hasten their marriage, it was something which others — particularly she — could pardon and accept.

If she was drawn to him for his strength and dominance, which sometimes ran into ruthlessness, she had no right to complain if he turned it thus upon her.

She had made Alan promise to write her, if he was not to return, regarding what he learned; and a letter came to her on the fourth day from him in Manitowoc. The postoffice employees had no recollection, he said, of the person who had mailed the package; it simply had been dropped by some one into the receptacle for mailing packages of that sort. They did not know the handwriting upon the wrapper, which

he had taken with him; nor was it known at the bank or in any of the stores where he had shown it. The shoe dealer had no recollection of that particular box. Alan, however, was continuing his inquiries.

In September he reported in a brief, totally impersonal note, that he was continuing with the investigations he had been making previous to his visit to Harbor Point; this came from Sarnia, Ontario. In October he sent a different address where he could be found in case anything more came, such as the box which had come to Constance in August.

She wrote to him in reply each time; in lack of anything more important to tell him, she related some of her activities and inquired about his. After she had written him thus twice, he replied, describing his life on the boats pleasantly and humorously; then, though she immediately replied, she did not hear from him again.

She had returned to Chicago late in September and soon was very busy with social affairs, benefits, and bazaars which were given that fall for the Red Cross and the different Allied causes; a little later came a series of the more personal and absorbing luncheons and dances and dinners for her and for Henry, since their engagement, which long had been taken for granted by every one who knew them, was announced now. So the days drifted into December and winter again.

The lake, beating against the esplanade across the Drive before Constance's windows, had changed its color; it had no longer its autumn blue and silver; it was gray, sluggish with floating needle-points of ice held in solution. The floe had not yet begun to form,

but the piers and breakwaters had white ice caps frozen from spray — harbingers of the closing of navigation. The summer boats, those of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman with the rest, were being tied up. The birds were gone; only the gulls remained — gray, clamorous shapes circling and calling to one another across the water. Early in December the newspapers announced the closing of the locks at the "Soo" by the ice.

That she had not heard from Alan was beginning to recur to Constance with strange insistence. He must have left the boats by now, unless he had found work on one of those few which ran through the winter.

He and his occupation, instead of slipping from her thoughts with time, absorbed her more and more. Soon after he had gone to Manitowoc and he had written that he had discovered nothing, she had gone to the office of the Petoskey paper and, looking back over the twenty-year-old files, she had read the account of the loss of the *Miwaka*, with all on board. That fate was modified only by the Indian Drum beating short. So one man from the *Miwaka* had been saved somehow, many believed. If that could have been, there was, or there had been, some one alive after the ship "disappeared"— Alan's word went through her with a chill — who knew what had happened to the ship and who knew of the fate of his shipmates.

She had gone over the names again; if there was meaning in the Drum, who was the man who had been saved and visited that fate on Benjamin Corvet? Was it Luke? There was no Luke named among the crew; but such men often went by many names. If Luke had been among the crew of the *Miwaka* and had

brought from that lost ship something which threatened Uncle Benny that, at least, explained Luke.

Then another idea had seized her. Captain Caleb Stafford was named among the lost, of course; with him had perished his son, a boy of three. That was all that was said, and all that was to be learned of him, the boy.

Alan had been three then. This was wild, crazy speculation. The ship was lost with all hands; only the Drum, believed in by the superstitious and the most ignorant, denied that. The Drum said that one soul had been saved. How could a child of three have been saved when strong men, to the last one, had perished? And, if he had been saved, he was Stafford's son. Why should Uncle Benny have sent him away and cared for him and then sent for him and, himself disappearing, leave all he had to — Stafford's son?

Or was he Stafford's son? Her thought went back to the things which had been sent — the things from a man's pockets with a wedding ring among them. She had believed that the ring cleared the mother's name; might it in reality only more involve it? Why had it come back like this to the man by whom, perhaps, it had been given? Henry's words came again and again to Constance: "It's a queer concern you've got for Ben. Leave it alone, I tell you!" He knew then something about Uncle Benny which might have brought on some terrible thing which Henry did not know but might guess? Constance went weak within. Uncle Benny's wife had left him, she remembered. Was it better, after all, to "leave it alone?"

But it wasn't a thing which one could command one's mind to leave alone; and Constance could not make her-

self try to, so long as it concerned Alan. Coming home late one afternoon toward the middle of December, she dismissed the motor and stood gazing at the gulls. The day was chill, gray; the air had the feel, and the voices of the gulls had the sound to her, which precede the coming of a severe storm. The gulls recalled sharply to her the day when Alan first had come to them, and how she had been the one first to meet him and the child verse which had told him that he too was of the lakes.

She went on into the house. A telegraph envelope addressed to her father was on the table in the hall. A servant told her the message had come an hour before, and that he had telephoned to Mr. Sherrill's office, but Mr. Sherrill was not in. There was no reason for her thinking that the message might be from Alan except his presence in her thoughts, but she went at once to the telephone and called her father. He was in now, and he directed her to open the message and read it to him.

"Have some one," she read aloud; she choked in her excitement at what came next —"Have some one who knew Mr. Corvet well enough to recognize him, even if greatly changed, meet Carferry Number 25 Manitowoc Wednesday this week. Alan Conrad."

Her heart was beating fast. "Are you there?" she said into the 'phone.

"Yes."

"Whom shall you send?"

There was an instant's silence. "I shall go myself," her father answered.

She hung up the receiver. Had Alan found Uncle Benny? He had found, apparently, someone whose re-

semblance to the picture she had showed him was marked enough to make him believe that person might be Benjamin Corvet; or he had heard of some one who, from the account he had received, he thought might be. She read again the words of the telegram . . . "even if greatly changed!" and she felt startling and terrifying warning in that phrase.

CHAPTER XV

OLD BURR OF THE FERRY

IT was in late November and while the coal carrier *Pontiac*, on which he was serving as lookout, was in Lake Superior that Alan first heard of Jim Burr. The name spoken among some other names in casual conversation by a member of the crew, stirred and excited him; the name James Burr, occurring on Benjamin Corvet's list, had borne opposite it the legend "All disappeared; no trace," and Alan, whose investigations had accounted for all others whom the list contained, had been able regarding Burr only to verify the fact that at the address given no one of this name was to be found.

He questioned the oiler who had mentioned Burr. The man had met Burr one night in Manitowoc with other men, and something about the old man had impressed both his name and image on him; he knew no more than that. At Manitowoc! — the place from which Captain Stafford's watch had been sent to Constance Sherrill and where Alan had sought for, but had failed to find, the sender! Had Alan stumbled by chance upon the one whom Benjamin Corvet had been unable to trace? Had Corvet, after his disappearance, found Burr? Had Burr been the sender, under Corvet's direction, of those things? Alan speculated upon this. The man might well, of course, be some

other Jim Burr; there were probably many men by that name. Yet the James Burr of Corvet's list must have been such a one as the oiler described — a white haired old man.

Alan could not leave the *Pontiac* and go at once to Manitowoc to seek for Burr; for he was needed where he was. The season of navigation on Lake Superior was near its close. In Duluth skippers were clamoring for cargoes; ships were lading in haste for a last trip before ice closed the lake's outlet at the Soo against all ships. It was fully a week later and after the *Pontiac* had been laden again and had repassed the length of Lake Superior that Alan left the vessel at Sault Ste. Marie and took the train for Manitowoc.

The little lake port of Manitowoc, which he reached in the late afternoon, was turbulent with the lake season's approaching close. Long lines of bulk freighters, loaded and tied up to wait for spring, filled the river; their released crews rioted through the town. Alan inquired for the seamen's drinking place, where his informant had met Jim Burr; following the directions he received he made his way along the river bank until he found it. The place was neat, immaculate; a score of lakemen sat talking at little tables or leaned against the bar. Alan inquired of the proprietor for Jim Burr.

The proprietor knew old Jim Burr — yes. Burr was a wheelsman on Carferry Number 25. He was a lakeman, experienced and capable; that fact, some months before, had served as introduction for him to the frequenters of this place. When the ferry was in harbor and his duties left him idle, Burr came up and waited there, occupying always the same chair. He

never drank; he never spoke to others unless they spoke first to him, but then he talked freely about old days on the lakes, about ships which had been lost and about men long dead.

Alan decided that there could be no better place to interview old Burr than here; he waited therefore, and in the early evening the old man came in.

Alan watched him curiously as, without speaking to any one, he went to the chair recognized as his and sat down. He was a slender but muscularly built man seeming about sixty-five, but he might be considerably younger or older than that. His hair was completely white; his nose was thin and sensitive; his face was smoothly placid, emotionless, contented; his eyes were queerly clouded, deepset and intent.

Those whose names Alan had found on Corvet's list had been of all ages, young and old; but Burr might well have been a contemporary of Corvet on the lakes. Alan moved over and took a seat beside the old man.

"You're from No. 25?" he asked, to draw him into conversation.

"Yes."

"I've been working on the carrier *Pontiac* as lookout. She's on her way to tie up at Cleveland, so I left her and came on here. You don't know whether there's a chance for me to get a place through the winter on No. 25?"

Old Burr reflected. "One of our boys has been talking of leaving. I don't know when he expects to go. You might ask."

"Thank you; I will. My name's Conrad — Alan Conrad."

He saw no recognition of the name in Burr's recep-

tion of it; but he had not expected that. None of those on Benjamin Corvet's list had had any knowledge of Alan Conrad or had heard the name before.

Alan was silent, watching the old man; Burr, silent too, seemed listening to the conversation which came to them from the tables near by, where men were talking of cargoes, and of ships and of men who worked and sailed upon them.

"How long have you been on the lakes?" Alan inquired.

"All my life." The question awakened reminiscence in the old man. "My father had a farm. I didn't like farming. The schooners — they were almost all schooners in those days — came in to load with lumber. When I was nine years old, I ran away and got on board a schooner. I've been at it, sail or steam, ever since."

"Do you remember the *Miwaka?*"

"The *Miwaka?*"

Old Burr turned abruptly and studied Alan with a slow scrutiny which seemed to look him through and through; yet while his eyes remained fixed on Alan suddenly they grew blank. He was not thinking now of Alan, but had turned his thoughts within himself.

"I remember her — yes. She was lost in '95," he said. "In '95," he repeated.

"You lost a nephew with her, didn't you?"

"A nephew — no. That is a mistake. I lost a brother."

"Where were you living then?"

"In Emmet County, Michigan."

"When did you move to Point Corbay, Ontario?"

"I never lived at Point Corbay."

"Did any of your family live there?"

"No." Old Burr looked away from Alan, and the queer cloudiness of his eyes became more evident.

"Why do you ask all this?" he said irritably. "What have they been telling you about me? I told you about myself; our farm was in Emmet County, but we had a liking for the lake. One of my brothers was lost in '95 with the *Miwaka* and another in '99 with the *Susan Hart*."

"Did you know Benjamin Corvet?" Alan asked.

Old Burr stared at him uncertainly. "I know who he is, of course."

"You never met him?"

"No."

"Did you receive a communication from him some time this year?"

"From him? From Benjamin Corvet? No." Old Burr's uneasiness seemed to increase. "What sort of communication?"

"A request to send some things to Miss Constance Sherrill at Harbor Point."

"I never heard of Miss Constance Sherrill. To send what things?"

"Several things — among them a watch which had belonged to Captain Stafford of the *Miwaka*."

Old Burr got up suddenly and stood gazing down at Alan. "A watch of Captain Stafford's? — no," he said agitatedly. "No!"

He moved away and left the place; and Alan sprang up and followed him.

He was not, it seemed probable to Alan now, the James Burr of Corvet's list; at least Alan could not see how he could be that one. Among the names of the

crew of the *Miwaka* Alan had found that of a Frank Burr, and his inquiries had informed him that this man was a nephew of the James Burr who had lived near Port Corbay and had "disappeared" with all his family. Old Burr had not lived at Port Corbay — at least, he claimed not to have lived there; he gave another address and assigned to himself quite different connections. For every member of the crew of the *Miwaka* there had been a corresponding, but different name upon Corvet's list — the name of a close relative. If old Burr was not related to the Burr on Corvet's list, what connection could he have with the *Miwaka*, and why should Alan's questions have agitated him so? Alan would not lose sight of old Burr until he had learned the reason for that.

He followed, as the old man crossed the bridge and turned to his left among the buildings on the river front. Burr's figure, vague in the dusk, crossed the railroad yards and made its way to where a huge black bulk, which Alan recognized as the ferry, loomed at the waterside. He disappeared aboard it. Alan, following him, gazed about.

A long, broad, black boat the ferry was, almost four hundred feet to the tall, bluff bow. Seen from the stem, the ship seemed only an unusually rugged and powerful steam freighter; viewed from the beam, the vessel appeared slightly short for its freeboard; only when observed from the stern did its distinguishing peculiarity become plain; for a few feet only above the water line, the stern was all cut away, and the long, low cavern of the deck gleamed with rails upon which the electric lights glinted. Save for the supports of the superstructure and where the funnels and ventilator

pipes passed up from below, that whole strata of the ship was a vast car shed; its tracks, running to the edge of the stern, touched tracks on the dock. A freight engine was backing loaded cars from a train of sixteen cars upon the rails on the starboard side; another train of sixteen big box cars waited to go aboard on the tracks to the port of the center stanchions. When the two trains were aboard, the great vessel—"No. 25," in big white stencil upon her black sides were her distinguishing marks—would thrust out into the ice and gale for the Michigan shore nearly eighty miles away.

Alan thrilled a little at his inspection of the ferry. He had not seen close at hand before one of these great craft which, throughout the winter, brave ice and storm after all—or nearly all—other lake boats are tied up. He had not meant to apply there when he questioned old Burr about a berth on the ferry; he had used that merely as a means of getting into conversation with the old man. But now he meant to apply; for it would enable him to find out more about old Burr.

He went forward between the tracks upon the deck to the companionway, and ascended and found the skipper and presented his credentials. No berth on the ferry was vacant yet but one soon would be, and Alan was accepted in lieu of the man who was about to leave; his wages would not begin until the other man left, but in the meantime he could remain aboard the ferry if he wished. Alan elected to remain aboard. The skipper called a man to assign quarters to Alan, and Alan, going with the man, questioned him about Burr.

All that was known definitely about old Burr on the ferry, it appeared, was that he had joined the vessel in

the early spring. Before that — they did not know; he might be an old lakeman who, after spending years ashore, had returned to the lakes for a livelihood. He had represented himself as experienced and trained upon the lakes, and he had been able to demonstrate his fitness; in spite of his age he was one of the most capable of the crew.

The next morning, Alan approached old Burr in the crew's quarters and tried to draw him into conversation again about himself; but Burr only stared at him with his intent and oddly introspective eyes and would not talk upon this subject. A week passed; Alan, established as a lookout now on No. 25 and carrying on his duties, saw Burr daily and almost every hour; his watch coincided with Burr's watch at the wheel — they went on duty and were relieved together. Yet better acquaintance did not make the old man more communicative; a score of times Alan attempted to get him to tell more about himself, but he evaded Alan's questions and, if Alan persisted, he avoided him. Then, on an evening bitter cold with the coming of winter, clear and filled with stars, Alan, just relieved from watch, stood by the pilothouse as Burr also was relieved. The old man paused beside him, looking to the west.

"Have you ever been in Sturgeon's Bay?" he asked.

"In Wisconsin? No."

"There is a small house there — and a child; born," he seemed figuring the date, "Feb. 12, 1914."

"A relative of yours?"

"Yes."

"One of your brothers' children or grandchildren?"

"I had no brothers," old Burr said quietly.

Alan stared at him, amazed. "But you told me

about your brothers and about their being lost in wrecks on the lake; and about your home in Emmet County!"

"I never lived in Emmet County," old Burr replied. "Some one else must have told you that about me. I come from Canada — of French-Canadian descent. My family were of the Hudson Bay people. I was a guide and hunter until recently. Only a few years ago I came onto the lakes, but my cousin came here before I did. It is his child."

Old Burr moved away and Alan turned to the mate.

"What do you make of old Burr?" he asked.

"He's a romancer. We get 'em that way once in a while — old liars! He'll give you twenty different accounts of himself — twenty different lives. None of them is true. I don't know who he is or where he came from, but it's sure he isn't any of the things he says he is."

Alan turned away, chill with disappointment. It was only that, then — old Burr was a romancer after the manner of some old seamen. He constructed for his own amusement these "lives." He was not only not the Burr of Corvet's list; he was some one not any way connected with the *Miwaka* or with Corvet. Yet Alan, upon reflection, could not believe that it was only this. Burr, if he had wished to do that, might perhaps merely have simulated agitation when Alan questioned him about the *Miwaka;* but why should he have wished to simulate it? Alan could conceive of no condition which by any possibility could have suggested such simulation to the old man.

He ceased now, however, to question Burr since questioning either had no result at all or led the old man to

weaving fictions; in response the old man became by degrees more communicative. He told Alan, at different times, a number of other "lives" which he claimed as his own. In only a few of these lives had he been, by his account, a seaman; he had been a multitude of other things — in some a farmer, in others a lumberjack or a fisherman; he had been born, he told, in a half-dozen different places and came of as many different sorts of people.

On deck, one night, listening while old Burr related his sixth or seventh life, excitement suddenly seized Alan. Burr, in this life which he was telling, claimed to be an Englishman born in Liverpool. He had been, he said, a seaman in the British navy; he had been present at the shelling of Alexandria; later, because of some difficulty which he glossed over, he had deserted and had come to "the States"; he had been first a deckhand then the mate of a tramp schooner on the lakes. Alan, gazing at the old man, felt exultation leaping and throbbing within him. He recognized this "life"; he knew in advance its incidents. This life which old Burr was rehearsing to him as his own, was the actual life of Munro Burkhalter, one of the men on Corvet's list regarding whom Alan had been able to obtain full information!

Alan sped below, when he was relieved from watch, and got out the clippings left by Corvet and the notes of what he himself had learned in his visits to the homes of these people. His excitement grew greater as he pored over them; he found that he could account, with their aid, for all that old Burr had told him. Old Burr's "lives" were not, of course, his; yet neither were they fictions. They — their incidents, at least —

were actualities. They were woven from the lives of those upon Corvet's list! Alan felt his skin prickling and the blood beating fast in his temples. How could Burr have known these incidents? Who could he be to know them all? To what man, but one, could all of them be known? Was old Burr . . . Benjamin Corvet?

Alan could give no certain answer to that question. He could not find any definite resemblance in Burr's placid face to the picture of Corvet which Constance had shown him. Yet, as regarded his age and his physical characteristics, there was nothing to make his identity with Benjamin Corvet impossible. Sherrill or others who had known Benjamin Corvet well, might be able to find resemblances which Alan could not. And, whether Burr was or was not Corvet, he was undeniably some one to whom the particulars of Corvet's life were known.

Alan telegraphed that day to Sherrill; but when the message had gone doubt seized him. He awaited eagerly the coming of whoever Sherrill might send and the revelations regarding Corvet which might come then; but at the same time he shrunk from that revelation. He himself had become, he knew, wholly of the lakes now; his life, whatever his future might be, would be concerned with them. Yet he was not of them in the way he would have wished to be; he was no more than a common seaman.

Benjamin Corvet, when he went away, had tried to leave his place and power among lakemen to Alan; Alan, refusing to accept what Corvet had left until Corvet's reason should be known, had felt obliged also to refuse friendship with the Sherrills. When revela-

tion came, would it make possible Alan's acceptance of the place Corvet had prepared for him, or would it leave him where he was? Would it bring him nearer to Constance Sherrill, or would it set him forever away from her?

CHAPTER XVI

A GHOST SHIP

"COLDER some to-night, Conrad."

"Yes, sir."

"Strait's freezing over, they say."

"Pretty stiff ice outside here already, sir."

The skipper glanced out and smiled confidently but without further comment; yet he took occasion to go down and pass along the car deck and observe the men who under direction of the mate were locking the lugs under the car wheels, as the trains came on board. The wind, which had risen with nightfall to a gale off the water, whipped snow with it which swirled and back-eddied with the switching cars into the great, gaping stern of the ferry.

Officially, and to chief extent in actuality, navigation now had "closed" for the winter. Further up the harbor, beyond Number 25, glowed the white lanterns marking two vessels moored and "laid up" till spring; another was still in the active process of "laying up." Marine insurance, as regards all ordinary craft, had ceased; and the Government at sunrise, five days before, had taken the warning lights from the Straits of Mackinaw, from Ile-aux-Galets, from north Manitou, and the Fox Islands; and the light at Beaver Island had but five nights more to burn.

Alan followed as the captain went below, and he went

aft between the car tracks, watching old Burr. Having no particular duty when the boat was in dock, old Burr had gone toward the steamer "laying up," and now was standing watching with absorption the work going on. There was a tug a little farther along, with steam up and black smoke pouring from its short funnel. Old Burr observed this boat too and moved up a little nearer. Alan, following the wheelsman, came opposite the stern of the freighter; the snow let through enough of the light from the dock to show the name *Stoughton*. It was, Alan knew, a Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman ship. He moved closer to old Burr and watched him more intently.

"What's the matter?" he asked, as the old man halted and, looking down at the tug, shook his head.

"They're crossing," the wheelsman said aloud, but more to himself than to Alan. "They're laying her up here," he jerked his head toward the *Stoughton*. "Then they're crossing to Manitowoc on the tug."

"What's the matter with that?" Alan cried.

Burr drew up his shoulders and ducked his head down as a gust blew. It was cold, very cold indeed in that wind, but the old man had on a mackinaw and, out on the lake, Alan had seen him on deck coatless in weather almost as cold as this.

"It's a winter storm," Alan cried. "It's like it that way; but to-day's the 15th, not the 5th of December!"

"That's right," Burr agreed. "That's right."

The reply was absent, as though Alan had stumbled upon what he was thinking, and Burr had no thought yet to wonder at it.

"And it's the *Stoughton* they're laying up, not

the —" he stopped and stared at Burr to let him supply the word and, when the old man did not, he repeated again —" not the —"

" No," Burr agreed again, as though the name had been given. " No."

" It was the *Martha Corvet* you laid up, wasn't it? " Alan cried quickly. " Tell me — that time on the 5th — it was the *Martha Corvet?* "

Burr jerked away; Alan caught him again and, with physical strength, detained him. " Wasn't it that? " he demanded. "Answer me; it was the *Martha Corvet?* "

The wheelsman struggled; he seemed suddenly terrified with the terror which, instead of weakening, supplied infuriated strength. He threw Alan off for an instant and started to flee back toward the ferry; and now Alan let him go, only following a few steps to make sure that the wheelsman returned to Number 25.

Watching old Burr until he was aboard the ferry, Alan spun about and went back to the *Stoughton.*

Work of laying up the big steamer had been finished, and in the snow-filled dusk her crew were coming ashore. Alan, boarding, went to the captain's cabin, where he found the *Stoughton's* master making ready to leave the ship. The captain, a man of forty-five or fifty, reminded Alan vaguely of one of the shipmasters who had been in Spearman's office when Alan first went there in the spring. If he had been there, he showed no recollection of Alan now, but good-humoredly looked up for the stranger to state his business.

" I'm from Number 25," Alan introduced himself.

"This is a Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman ship. Do you know Mr. Corvet when you see him, sir?"

"Know Ben Corvet?" the captain repeated. The manner of the young man from the car ferry told him it was not an idle question. "Yes; I know Ben Corvet. I ain't seen him much in late years."

"Will you come with me for a few minutes then, Captain?" Alan asked. As the skipper stared at him and hesitated, Alan made explanation, "Mr. Corvet has been missing for months. His friends have said he's been away somewhere for his health; but the truth is, he's been missing. There's a man I want you to look at, Captain — if you used to know Mr. Corvet."

"I've heard of that." The captain moved alertly now. "Where is he?"

Alan led the master to the Ferry. Old Burr had left the car deck; they found him on his way to the wheelhouse.

The *Stoughton's* skipper stared. "That the man?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir. Remember to allow for his clothes and his not being shaved and that something has happened."

The *Stoughton's* skipper followed to the wheelhouse and spoke to Burr. Alan's blood beat fast as he watched this conversation. Once or twice more the skipper seemed surprised; but it was plain that his first interest in Burr quickly had vanished; when he left the wheelhouse, he returned to Alan indulgently. "You thought that was Mr. Corvet?" he asked, amused.

"You don't think so?" Alan asked.

"Ben Corvet like that? Did you ever see Ben Corvet?"

"Only his picture," Alan confessed. "But you looked queer when you first saw Burr."

"That was a trick of his eyes. Say, they did give me a start. Ben Corvet had just that sort of trick of looking through a man."

"And his eyes were like that?"

"Sure. But Ben Corvet couldn't be like that!"

Alan prepared to go on duty. He would not let himself be disappointed by the skipper's failure to identify old Burr; the skipper had known immediately at sight of the old man that he was the one whom Alan thought was Corvet, and he had found a definite resemblance. It might well have been only the impossibility of believing that Corvet could have become like this which had prevented fuller recognition. Mr. Sherrill, undoubtedly, would send some one more familiar with Benjamin Corvet and who might make proper allowances.

Alan went forward to his post as a blast from the steam whistle of the switching engine, announcing that the cars all were on board, was answered by a warning blast from the ferry. On the car decks the trains had been secured in place; and, because of the roughness of the weather, the wheels had been locked upon the tracks with additional chains as well as with the blocks and chains usually used. Orders now sounded from the bridge; the steel deck began to shake with the reverberations of the engines; the mooring lines were taken in; the rails upon the fantail of the ferry separated from the rails upon the wharf, and clear water showed between. Alan took up his slow pace as look-

out from rail to rail across the bow, straining his eyes forward into the thickness of the snow-filled night.

Because of the severe cold, the watches had been shortened. Alan would be relieved from time to time to warm himself, and then he would return to duty again. Old Burr at the wheel would be relieved and would go on duty at the same hours as Alan himself. Benjamin Corvet! The fancy reiterated itself to him. Could he be mistaken? Was that man, whose eyes turned alternately from the compass to the bow of the ferry as it shifted and rose and fell, the same who had sat in that lonely chair turned toward the fireplace in the house on Astor Street? Were those hands, which held the steamer to her course, the hands which had written to Alan in secret from the little room off his bedroom and which pasted so carefully the newspaper clippings concealed in the library?

Regularly at the end of every minute, a blast from the steam whistle reverberated; for a while, signals from the shore answered; for a few minutes the shore lights glowed through the snow. Then the lights were gone, and the eddies of the gale ceased to bring echoes of the obscuration signals. Steadily, at short, sixty-second intervals, the blast of Number 25's warning burst from the whistle; then that too stopped. The great ferry was on the lake alone; in her course, Number 25 was cutting across the lanes of all ordinary lake travel; but now, with ordinary navigation closed, the position of every other ship upon the lake was known to the officers, and formal signals were not thought necessary. Flat floes, driven by wind and wave, had windrowed in their course; as Number 25,

which was capable of maintaining two thirds its open water speed when running through solid "green" ice two feet thick, met this obstruction, its undercut bow rose slightly; the ice, crushed down and to the sides, hurled, pounding and scraping, under the keel and along the black, steel sides of the ship; Alan could hear the hull resounding to the buffeting as it hurled the floes away, and more came, or the wind threw them back. The water was washing high — higher than Alan had experienced seas before. The wind, smashing almost straight across the lake from the west, with only a gust or two from the north, was throwing up the water in great rushing ridges on which the bow of Number 25 rose jerkily up and up, suddenly to fall, as the support passed on, so that the next wave washed nearly to the rail.

Alan faced the wind with mackinaw buttoned about his throat; to make certain his hearing, his ears were unprotected. They numbed frequently, and he drew a hand out of the glove to rub them. The windows to protect the wheelsman had been dropped, as the snow had gathered on the glass; and at intervals, as he glanced back, he could see old Burr's face as he switched on a dim light to look at the compass. The strange placidity which usually characterized the old man's face had not returned to it since Alan had spoken with him on the dock; its look was intent and queerly drawn. Was old Burr beginning to remember — remember that he was Benjamin Corvet? Alan did not believe it could be that; again and again he had spoken Corvet's name to him without effect. Yet there must have been times when, if he was actually Corvet, he had remembered who he was. He must have remembered

that when he had written directions to some one to send those things to Constance Sherrill; or, a strange thought had come to Alan, had he written those instructions to himself? Had there been a moment when he had been so much himself that he had realized that he might not be himself again and so had written the order which later, mechanically, he had obeyed? This certainly would account for the package having been mailed at Manitowoc and for Alan's failure to find out by whom it had been mailed. It would account too for the unknown handwriting upon the wrapper, if some one on the ferry had addressed the package for the old man. He must inquire whether any one among the crew had done that.

What could have brought back that moment of recollection to Corvet, Alan wondered; the finding of the things which he had sent? What might bring another such moment? Would his seeing the Sherrills again — or Spearman — act to restore him?

For half an hour Alan paced steadily at the bow. The storm was increasing noticeably in fierceness; the wind-driven snowflakes had changed to hard pellets which, like little bullets, cut and stung the face; and it was growing colder. From a cabin window came the blue flash of the wireless, which had been silent after notifying the shore stations of their departure. It had commenced again; this was unusual. Something still more unusual followed at once; the direction of the gale seemed slowly to shift, and with it the wash of the water; instead of the wind and the waves coming from dead ahead now, they moved to the port beam, and Number 25, still pitching with the thrust through the seas, also began to roll. This meant, of course, that

the steamer had changed its course and was making almost due north. It seemed to Alan to force its engines faster; the deck vibrated more. Alan had not heard the orders for this change and could only speculate as to what it might mean.

His relief came after a few minutes more.

"Where are we heading?" Alan asked.

"Radio," the relief announced. "The *H. C. Richardson* calling; she's up by the Manitous."

"What sort of trouble?"

"She's not in trouble; it's another ship."

"What ship?"

"No word as to that."

Alan, not delaying to question further, went back to the cabins.

These stretched aft, behind the bridge, along the upper deck, some score on each side of the ship; they had accommodations for almost a hundred passengers; but on this crossing only a few were occupied. Alan had noticed some half dozen men — business men, no doubt, forced to make the crossing and, one of them, a Catholic priest, returning probably to some mission in the north; he had seen no women among them. A little group of passengers were gathered now in the door of or just outside the wireless cabin, which was one of the row on the starboard side. Stewards stood with them and the cabin maid; within, and bending over the table with the radio instrument, was the operator with the second officer beside him. The violet spark was rasping, and the operator, his receivers strapped over his ears, strained to listen. He got no reply, evidently, and he struck his key again; now, as he listened, he wrote slowly on a pad.

"You got 'em?" some one cried. "You got 'em now?"

The operator continued to write; the second mate, reading, shook his head, "It's only the *Richardson* again."

"What is it?" Alan asked the officer.

"The *Richardson* heard four blasts of a steam whistle about an hour ago when she was opposite the Manitous. She answered with the whistle and turned toward the blasts. She couldn't find any ship." The officer's reply was interrupted by some of the others. "Then . . . that was a few minutes ago . . . they heard the four long again. . . . They'd tried to pick up the other ship with radio before. . . . Yes; we got that here. . . . Tried again and got no answer. . . . But they heard the blasts for half an hour. . . . They said they seemed to be almost beside the ship once. . . . But they didn't see anything. Then the blasts stopped . . . sudden, cut off short in the middle as though something happened. . . . She was blowing distress all right. . . . The *Richardson's* searching again now. . . . Yes, she's searching for boats."

"Any one else answered?" Alan asked.

"Shore stations on both sides."

"Do they know what ship it is?"

"No."

"What ship might be there now?"

The officer could not answer that. He had known where the *Richardson* must be; he knew of no other likely to be there at this season. The spray from the waves had frozen upon Alan; ice gleamed and glinted from the rail and from the deck. Alan's shoulders drew up in a spasm. The *Richardson*, they said, was

looking for boats; how long could men live in little boats exposed to that gale and cold?

He turned back to the others about the radio cabin; the glow from within showed him faces as gray as his; it lighted a face on the opposite side of the door — a face haggard with dreadful fright. Old Burr jerked about as Alan spoke to him and moved away alone; Alan followed him and seized his arm.

"What's the matter?" Alan demanded, holding to him.

"The four blasts!" the wheelsman repeated. "They heard the four blasts!" He iterated it once more.

"Yes," Alan urged. "Why not?"

"But where no ship ought to be; so they couldn't find the ship — they couldn't find the ship!" Terror, of awful abjectness, came over the old man. He freed himself from Alan and went forward.

Alan followed him to the quarters of the crew, where night lunch for the men relieved from watch had been set out, and took a seat at the table opposite him. The louder echoing of the steel hull and the roll and pitching of the vessel, which set the table with its dishes swaying, showed that the sea was still increasing, and also that they were now meeting heavier ice. At the table men computed that Number 25 had now made some twenty miles north off its course, and must therefore be approaching the neighborhood where the distress signals had been heard; they speculated uselessly as to what ship could have been in that part of the lake and made the signals. Old Burr took no part in this conversation, but listened to it with frightened eyes, and presently got up and went away, leaving his coffee unfinished.

Number 25 was blowing its steam whistle again at the end of every minute.

Alan, after taking a second cup of coffee, went aft to the car deck. The roar and echoing tumult of the ice against the hull here drowned all other sounds. The thirty-two freight cars, in their four long lines, stood wedged and chained and blocked in place; they tipped and tilted, rolled and swayed like the stanchions and sides of the ship, fixed and secure. Jacks on the steel deck under the edges of the cars, kept them from rocking on their trucks. Men paced watchfully between the tracks, observing the movement of the cars. The cars creaked and groaned, as they worked a little this way and that; the men sprang with sledges and drove the blocks tight again or took an additional turn upon the jacks.

As Alan ascended and went forward to his duty, the increase in the severity of the gale was very evident; the thermometer, the wheelsman said, had dropped below zero. Ice was making rapidly on the hull of the ferry, where the spray, flying thicker through the snow, was freezing as it struck. The deck was all ice now underfoot, and the rails were swollen to great gleaming slabs which joined and grew together; a parapet of ice had appeared on the bow; and all about the swirling snow screen shut off everything. A searchlight which had flared from the bridge while Alan was below, pierced that screen not a ship's length ahead, or on the beam, before the glare dimmed to a glow which served to show no more than the fine, flying pellets of the storm. Except for the noise of the wind and the water, there had been no echo from beyond that screen since the shore signals were lost; now a low, far-away sound

came down the wind; it maintained itself for a few seconds, ceased, and then came again, and continued at uneven intervals longer than the timed blasts of Number 25's whistle. It might be the horn of some struggling sailing vessel, which in spite of the storm and the closed season was braving the seas; at the end of each interval of silence, the horn blew twice now; the echo came abeam, passed astern, and was no longer to be heard. How far away its origin had been, Alan could only guess; probably the sailing vessel, away to windward, had not heard the whistle of Number 25 at all.

Alan saw old Burr who, on his way to the wheelhouse, had halted to listen too. For several minutes the old man stood motionless; he came on again and stopped to listen. There had been no sound for quite five minutes now.

"You hear 'em?" Burr's voice quavered in Alan's ear. "You hear 'em?"

"What?" Alan asked.

"The four blasts! You hear 'em now? The four blasts!"

Burr was straining as he listened, and Alan stood still too; no sound came to him but the noise of the storm. "No," he replied. "I don't hear anything. Do you hear them now?"

Burr stood beside him without making reply; the searchlight, which had been pointed abeam, shot its glare forward, and Alan could see Burr's face in the dancing reflection of the flare. The man had never more plainly resembled the picture of Benjamin Corvet; that which had been in the picture, that strange sensation of something haunting him, was upon this man's face, a thousand times intensified; but instead of dis-

torting the features away from all likeness to the picture, it made it grotesquely identical.

And Burr was hearing something — something distinct and terrifying; but he seemed not surprised, but rather satisfied that Alan had not heard. He nodded his head at Alan's denial, and, without reply to Alan's demand, he stood listening. Something bent him forward; he straightened; again the something came; again he straightened. Four times Alan counted the motions. Burr was hearing again the four long blasts of distress! But there was no noise but the gale. "The four blasts!" He recalled old Burr's terror outside the radio cabin. The old man was hearing blasts which were not blown!

He moved on and took the wheel. He was a good wheelsman; the vessel seemed to be steadier on her course and, somehow, to steam easier when the old man steered. His illusions of hearing could do no harm, Alan considered; they were of concern only to Burr and to him.

Alan, relieving the lookout at the bow, stood on watch again. The ferry thrust on alone; in the wireless cabin the flame played steadily. They had been able to get the shore stations again on both sides of the lake and also the *Richardson.* As the ferry had worked northward, the *Richardson* had been working north too, evidently under the impression that the vessel in distress, if it had headway, was moving in that direction. By its position, which the *Richardson* gave, the steamers were about twenty miles apart.

Alan fought to keep his thought all to his duty; they must be now very nearly at the position where the *Richardson* last had heard the four long blasts; searching

for a ship or for boats, in that snow, was almost hopeless. With sight even along the searchlight's beam shortened to a few hundred yards, only accident could bring Number 25 up for rescue, only chance could carry the ship where the shouts — or the blasts of distress if the wreck still floated and had steam — would be heard.

Half numbed by the cold, Alan stamped and beat his arms about his body; the swing of the searchlight in the circle about the ship had become long ago monotonous, purely mechanical, like the blowing of the whistle; Alan stared patiently along the beam as it turned through the sector where he watched. They were meeting frequent and heavy floes, and Alan gave warning of these by hails to the bridge; the bridge answered and when possible the steamer avoided the floes; when it could not do that, it cut through them. The windrowed ice beating and crushing under the bows took strange, distorted, glistening shapes. Now another such shape appeared before them; where the glare dissipated to a bare glow in the swirling snow, he saw a vague shadow. The man moving the searchlight failed to see it, for he swung the beam on. The shadow was so dim, so ghostly, that Alan sought for it again before he hailed; he could see nothing now, yet he was surer, somehow, that he had seen.

"Something dead ahead, sir!" he shouted back to the bridge.

The bridge answered the hail as the searchlight pointed forward again. A gust carried the snow in a fierce flurry which the light failed to pierce; from the flurry suddenly, silently, spar by spar, a shadow emerged — the shadow of a ship. It was a steamer,

Alan saw, a long, low-lying old vessel without lights and without smoke from the funnel slanting up just forward of the after deckhouse; it rolled in the trough of the sea. The sides and all the lower works gleamed in ghostly phosphorescence, it was refraction of the searchlight beam from the ice sheathing all the ship, Alan's brain told him; but the sight of that soundless, shimmering ship materializing from behind the screen of snow struck a tremor through him.

"Ship!" he hailed. "Ahead! Dead ahead, sir! Ship!"

The shout of quick commands echoed to him from the bridge. Underfoot he could feel a new tumult of the deck; the engines, instantly stopped, were being set full speed astern. But Number 25, instead of sheering off to right or to left to avoid the collision, steered straight on.

The struggle of the engines against the momentum of the ferry told that others had seen the gleaming ship or, at least, had heard the hail. The skipper's instant decision had been to put to starboard; he had bawled that to the wheelsman, "Hard over!" But, though the screws turned full astern, Number 25 steered straight on. The flurry was blowing before the bow again; back through the snow the ice-shrouded shimmer ahead retreated. Alan leaped away and up to the wheelhouse.

Men were struggling there — the skipper, a mate, and old Burr, who had held the wheel. He clung to it yet, as one in a trance, fixed, staring ahead; his arms, stiff, had been holding Number 25 to her course. The skipper struck him and beat him away, while the mate tugged at the wheel. Burr was torn from the wheel

now, and he made no resistance to the skipper's blows; but the skipper, in his frenzy, struck him again and knocked him to the deck.

Slowly, steadily, Number 25 was responding to her helm. The bow pointed away, and the beam of the ferry came beside the beam of the silent steamer; they were very close now, so close that the searchlight, which had turned to keep on the other vessel, shot above its shimmering deck and lighted only the spars; and, as the water rose and fell between them, the ships sucked closer. Number 25 shook with an effort; it seemed opposing with all the power of its screws some force fatally drawing it on — opposing with the last resistance before giving way. Then, as the water fell again, the ferry seemed to slip and be drawn toward the other vessel; they mounted, side by side . . . crashed . . . recoiled . . . crashed again. That second crash threw all who had nothing to hold by, flat upon the deck; then Number 25 moved by; astern her now the silent steamer vanished in the snow.

Gongs boomed below; through the new confusion and the cries of men, orders began to become audible. Alan, scrambling to his knees, put an arm under old Burr, half raising him; the form encircled by his arm struggled up. The skipper, who had knocked Burr away from the wheel, ignored him now. The old man, dragging himself up and holding to Alan, was staring with terror at the snow screen behind which the vessel had disappeared. His lips moved.

"It was a ship!" he said; he seemed speaking more to himself than to Alan.

"Yes"; Alan said. "It was a ship; and you thought —"

"It wasn't there!" the wheelsman cried. "It's — it's been there all the time all night, and I'd — I'd steered through it ten times, twenty times, every few minutes; and then — that time it was a ship!"

Alan's excitement grew greater; he seized the old man again. "You thought it was the *Miwaka!*" Alan exclaimed. "The *Miwaka!* And you tried to steer through it again."

"The *Miwaka!*" old Burr's lips reiterated the word. "Yes; yes — the *Miwaka!*"

He struggled, writhing with some agony not physical. Alan tried to hold him, but now the old man was beside himself with dismay. He broke away and started aft. The captain's voice recalled Alan to himself, as he was about to follow, and he turned back to the wheelhouse.

The mate was at the wheel. He shouted to the captain about following the other ship; neither of them had seen sign of any one aboard it. "Derelict!" the skipper thought. The mate was swinging Number 25 about to follow and look at the ship again; and the searchlight beam swept back and forth through the snow; the blasts of the steam whistle, which had ceased after the collision, burst out again. As before, no response came from behind the snow. The searchlight picked up the silent ship again; it had settled down deeper now by the bow, Alan saw; the blow from Number 25 had robbed it of its last buoyancy; it was sinking. It dove down, then rose a little — sounds came from it now — sudden, explosive sounds; air pressure within hurled up a hatch; the tops of the cabins blew off, and the stem of the ship slipped down deep again, stopped, then dove without halt or recovery this time,

and the stern, upraised with the screw motionless, met the high wash of a wave, and went down with it and disappeared.

No man had shown himself; no shout had been heard; no little boat was seen or signalled.

The second officer, who had gone below to ascertain the damage done to the ferry, came up to report. Two of the compartments, those which had taken the crush of the collision, had flooded instantly; the bulkheads were holding — only leaking a little, the officer declared. Water was coming into a third compartment, that at the stern; the pumps were fighting this water. The shock had sprung seams elsewhere; but if the after compartment did not fill, the pumps might handle the rest.

Soddenness already was coming into the response of Number 25 to the lift of the waves; the ferry rolled less to the right as she came about, beam to the waves, and she dropped away more dully and deeply to the left; the ship was listing to port and the lift of the ice-heaped bow told of settling by the stern. Slowly Number 25 circled about, her engines holding bare headway; the radio, Alan heard, was sending to the *Richardson* and to the shore stations word of the finding and sinking of the ship and of the damage done to Number 25; whether that damage yet was described in the dispatches as disaster, Alan did not know. The steam whistle, which continued to roar, maintained the single, separated blasts of a ship still seaworthy and able to steer and even to give assistance. Alan was at the bow again on lookout duty, ordered to listen and to look for the little boats.

He gave to that duty all his conscious attention; but

through his thought, whether he willed it or not, ran a riotous exultation. As he paced from side to side and hailed and answered hails from the bridge, and while he strained for sight and hearing through the gale-swept snow, the leaping pulse within repeated, "I've found him! I've found him!" Alan held no longer possibility of doubt of old Burr's identity with Benjamin Corvet, since the old man had made plain to him that he was haunted by the *Miwaka.* Since that night in the house on Astor Street, when Spearman shouted to Alan that name, everything having to do with the secret of Benjamin Corvet's life had led, so far as Alan could follow it, to the *Miwaka;* all the change, which Sherrill described but could not account for, Alan had laid to that. Corvet only could have been so haunted by that ghostly ship, and there had been guilt of some awful sort in the old man's cry. Alan had found the man who had sent him away to Kansas when he was a child, who had supported him there and then, at last, sent for him; who had disappeared at his coming and left him all his possessions and his heritage of disgrace, who had paid blackmail to Luke, and who had sent, last, Captain Stafford's watch and the ring which came with it — the wedding ring.

Alan pulled his hand from his glove and felt in his pocket for the little band of gold. What would that mean to him now; what of that was he to learn? And, as he thought of that, Constance Sherrill came more insistently before him. What was he to learn for her, for his friend and Benjamin Corvet's friend, whom he, Uncle Benny, had warned not to care for Henry Spearman, and then had gone away to leave her to marry him? For she was to marry him, Alan had read.

It was with this that cold terror suddenly closed over him. Would he learn anything now from Benjamin Corvet, though he had found him? Only for an instant — a fleeting instant — had Benjamin Corvet's brain become clear as to the cause of his hallucination; consternation had overwhelmed him then, and he struggled free to attempt to mend the damage he had done.

More serious damage than first reported! The pumps certainly must be losing their fight with the water in the port compartment aft; for the bow steadily was lifting, the stern sinking. The starboard rail too was raised, and the list had become so sharp that water washed the deck abaft the forecastle to port. And the ferry was pointed straight into the gale now; long ago she had ceased to circle and steam slowly in search for boats; she struggled with all her power against the wind and the seas, a desperate insistence throbbing in the thrusts of the engines; for Number 25 was fleeing — fleeing for the western shore. She dared not turn to the nearer eastern shore to expose that shattered stern to the seas.

Four bells beat behind Alan; it was two o'clock. Relief should have come long before; but no one came. He was numbed now; ice from the spray crackled upon his clothing when he moved, and it fell in flakes upon the deck. The stark figure on the bridge was that of the second officer; so the thing which was happening below — the thing which was sending strange, violent, wanton tremors through the ship — was serious enough to call the skipper below, to make him abandon the bridge at this time! The tremors, quite distinct from the steady tremble of the engines and the thudding of

the pumps, came again. Alan, feeling them, jerked up and stamped and beat his arms to regain sensation. Some one stumbled toward him from the cabins now, a short figure in a great coat. It was a woman, he saw as she hailed him — the cabin maid.

"I'm taking your place!" she shouted to Alan. "You're wanted — every one's wanted on the car deck! The cars —" The gale and her fright stopped her voice as she struggled for speech, "The cars — the cars are loose!"

CHAPTER XVII

"HE KILLED YOUR FATHER"

ALAN ran aft along the starboard side, catching at the rail as the deck tilted; the sounds within the hull and the tremors following each sound came to him more distinctly as he advanced. Taking the shortest way to the car deck, he turned into the cabins to reach the passengers' companionway. The noises from the car deck, no longer muffled by the cabins, clanged and resounded in terrible tumult; with the clang and rumble of metal, rose shouts and roars of men.

To liberate and throw overboard heavily loaded cars from an endangered ship was so desperate an undertaking and so certain to cost life that men attempted it only in final extremities, when the ship must be lightened at any cost. Alan had never seen the effect of such an attempt, but he had heard of it as the fear which sat always on the hearts of the men who navigate the ferries — the cars loose on a rolling, lurching ship! He was going to that now. Two figures appeared before him, one half supporting, half dragging the other. Alan sprang and offered aid; but the injured man called to him to go on; others needed him. Alan went past them and down the steps to the car deck. Half-way down, the priest whom he had noticed among the passengers stood staring aft, a tense, black

figure; beside him other passengers were clinging to the handrail and staring down in awestruck fascination. The lowest steps had been crushed back and half uptorn; some monstrous, inanimate thing was battering about below; but the space at the foot of the steps was clear at that moment. Alan leaped over the ruin of the steps and down upon the car deck.

A giant iron casting six feet high and yards across and tons in weight, tumbled and ground before him; it was this which had swept away the steps; he had seen it, with two others like it, upon a flat car which had been shunted upon one of the tracks on the starboard side of the ferry, one of the tracks on his left now as he faced the stern. He leaped upon and over the great casting, which turned and spun with the motion of the ship as he vaulted it. The car deck was a pitching, swaying slope; the cars nearest him were still upon their tracks, but they tilted and swayed uglily from side to side; the jacks were gone from under them; the next cars already were hurled from the rails, their wheels screaming on the steel deck, clanging and thudding together in their couplings.

Alan ran aft between them. All the crew who could be called from deck and engine room and firehold were struggling at the fantail, under the direction of the captain, to throw off the cars. The mate was working as one of the men, and with him was Benjamin Corvet. The crew already must have loosened and thrown over the stern three cars from the two tracks on the port side; for there was a space vacant; and as the train charged into that space and the men threw themselves upon it, Alan leaped with them.

The leading car — a box car, heavily laden —

swayed and shrieked with the pitching of the ship. Corvet sprang between it and the car coupled behind; he drew out the pin from the coupling, and the men with pinch-bars attacked the car to isolate it and force it aft along the track. It moved slowly at first; then leaped its length; sharply with the lift of the deck, it stopped, toppled toward the men who, yelling to one another, scrambled away. The hundred-ton mass swung from side to side; the ship dropped swiftly to starboard, and the stern went down; the car charged, and its aftermost wheels left the deck; it swung about, slewed, and jammed across both port tracks. The men attacked it with dismay; Corvet's shout called them away and rallied them farther back; they ran with him to the car from which he had uncoupled it.

It was a flat car laden with steel beams. At Corvet's command, the crew ranged themselves beside it with bars. The bow of the ferry rose to some great wave and, with a cry to the men, Corvet pulled the pin. The others thrust with their bars, and the car slid down the sloping track; and Corvet, caught by some lashing of the beams, came with it. The car crashed into the box car, splintered it, turned it, shoved it, and thrust it over the fantail into the water; the flat car, telescoped into it, was dragged after. Alan leaped upon it and catching at Corvet, freed him and flung him down to the deck, and dropped with him. A cheer rose as the car cleared the fantail, dove, and disappeared.

Alan clambered to his feet. Corvet already was back among the cars again, shouting orders; the mate and the men who had followed him before leaped at his yells. The lurch which had cleared the two cars

together had jumped others away from the rails. They hurtled from side to side, splintering against the stanchions which stayed them from crashing across the center line of the ship; rebounding, they battered against the cars on the outer tracks and crushed them against the side of the ship. The wedges, blocks, and chains which had secured them banged about on the deck, useless; the men who tried to control these cars, dodging as they charged, no longer made attempt to secure the wheels. Corvet called them to throw ropes and chains to bind the loads which were letting go; the heavier loads — steel beams, castings, machinery — snapped their lashings, tipped from their flat cars and thundered down the deck. The cars tipped farther, turned over; others balanced back; it was upon their wheels that they charged forward, half riding one another, crashing and demolishing, as the ferry pitched; it was upon their trucks that they tottered and battered from side to side as the deck swayed. Now the stern again descended; a line of cars swept for the fantail. Corvet's cry came to Alan through the screaming of steel and the clangor of destruction. Corvet's cry sent men with bars beside the cars as the fantail dipped into the water; Corvet, again leading his crew, cleared the leader of those madly charging cars and ran it over the stern.

The fore trucks fell and, before the rear trucks reached the edge, the stern lifted and caught the car in the middle; it balanced, half over the water, half over the deck. Corvet crouched under the car with a crowbar; Alan and two others went with him; they worked the car on until the weight of the end over the water tipped it down; the balance broke, and the car

tumbled and dived. Corvet, having cleared another hundred tons, leaped back, calling to the crew.

They followed him again, unquestioning, obedient. Alan followed close to him. It was not pity which stirred him now for Benjamin Corvet; nor was it bitterness; but it certainly was not contempt. Of all the ways in which he had fancied finding Benjamin Corvet, he had never thought of seeing him like this!

It was, probably, only for a flash; but the great quality of leadership which he once had possessed, which Sherrill had described to Alan and which had been destroyed by the threat over him, had returned to him in this desperate emergency which he had created. How much or how little of his own condition Corvet understood, Alan could not tell; it was plain only that he comprehended that he had been the cause of the catastrophe, and in his fierce will to repair it he not only disregarded all risk to himself; he also had summoned up from within him and was spending the last strength of his spirit. But he was spending it in a losing fight.

He got off two more cars; yet the deck only dipped lower, and water washed farther and farther up over the fantail. New avalanches of iron descended as box cars above burst open; monstrous dynamo drums, broad-banded steel wheels and splintered crates of machinery battered about. Men, leaping from before the charging cars, got caught in the murderous melee of iron and steel and wheels; men's shrill cries came amid the scream of metal. Alan, tugging at a crate which had struck down a man, felt aid beside him and, turning, he saw the priest whom he had passed on the stairs. The priest was bruised and bloody; this was not his first effort to aid. Together they lifted an

end of the crate; they bent — Alan stepped back, and the priest knelt alone, his lips repeating the prayer for absolution. Screams of men came from behind; and the priest rose and turned. He saw men caught between two wrecks of cars crushing together; there was no moment to reach them; he stood and raised his arms to them, his head thrown back, his voice calling to them, as they died, the words of absolution.

Three more cars at the cost of two more lives the crew cleared, while the sheathing of ice spread over the steel inboard, and dissolution of all the cargo became complete. Cut stone and motor parts, chasses and castings, furniture and beams, swept back and forth, while the cars, burst and splintered, became monstrous missiles hurtling forward, sidewise, aslant, recoiling. Yet men, though scattered singly, tried to stay them by ropes and chains while the water washed higher and higher. Dimly, far away, deafened out by the clangor, the steam whistle of Number 25 was blowing the four long blasts of distress; Alan heard the sound now and then with indifferent wonder. All destruction had come for him to be contained within this car deck; here the ship loosed on itself all elements of annihilation; who could aid it from without? Alan caught the end of a chain which Corvet flung him and, though he knew it was useless, he carried it across from one stanchion to the next. Something, sweeping across the deck, caught him and carried him with it; it brought him before the coupled line of trucks which hurtled back and forth where the rails of track three had been. He was hurled before them and rolled over; something cold and heavy pinned him down; and upon him, the car trucks came.

But, before them, something warm and living — a hand and bare arm catching him quickly and pulling at him, tugged him a little farther on. Alan, looking up, saw Corvet beside him; Corvet, unable to move him farther, was crouching down there with him. Alan yelled to him to leap, to twist aside and get out of the way; but Corvet only crouched closer and put his arms over Alan; then the wreckage came upon them, driving them apart. As the movement stopped, Alan still could see Corvet dimly by the glow of the incandescent lamps overhead; the truck separated them. It bore down upon Alan, holding him motionless and, on the other side, it crushed upon Corvet's legs.

He turned over, as far as he could, and spoke to Alan. "You have been saving me, so now I tried to save you," he said simply. "What reason did you have for doing that? Why have you been keeping by me?"

"I'm Alan Conrad of Blue Rapids, Kansas," Alan cried to him. "And you're Benjamin Corvet! You know me; you sent for me! Why did you do that?"

Corvet made no reply to this. Alan, peering at him underneath the truck, could see that his hands were pressed against his face and that his body shook. Whether this was from some new physical pain from the movement of the wreckage, Alan did not know till he lowered his hands after a moment; and now he did not heed Alan or seem even to be aware of him.

"Dear little Connie!" he said aloud. "Dear little Connie! She mustn't marry him — not him! That must be seen to. What shall I do, what shall I do?"

Alan worked nearer him. "Why mustn't she marry

him?" he cried to Corvet. "Why? Ben Corvet, tell me! Tell me why!"

From above him, through the clangor of the cars, came the four blasts of the steam whistle. The indifference with which Alan had heard them a few minutes before had changed now to a twinge of terror. When men had been dying about him, in their attempts to save the ship, it had seemed a small thing for him to be crushed or to drown with them and with Benjamin Corvet, whom he had found at last. But Constance! Recollection of her was stirring in Corvet the torture of will to live; in Alan — he struggled and tried to free himself. As well as he could tell by feeling, the weight above him confined but was not crushing him; yet what gain for her if he only saved himself and not Corvet too? He turned back to Corvet.

"She's going to marry him, Ben Corvet!" he called. "They're betrothed; and they're going to be married, she and Henry Spearman!"

"Who are you?" Corvet seemed only with an effort to become conscious of Alan's presence.

"I'm Alan Conrad, whom you used to take care of. I'm from Blue Rapids. You know about me; are you my father, Ben Corvet? Are you my father or what — what are you to me?"

"Your father?" Corvet repeated. "Did he tell you that? He killed your father."

"Killed him? Killed him how?"

"Of course. He killed them all — all. But your father — he shot him; he shot him through the head!"

Alan twinged. Sight of Spearman came before him as he had first seen Spearman, cowering in Corvet's library in terror at an apparition. "And the bullet

hole above the eye!" So that was the hole made by the shot Spearman fired which had killed Alan's father — which shot him through the head! Alan peered at Corvet and called to him.

"Father Benitot!" Corvet called in response, not directly in reply to Alan's question, rather in response to what those questions stirred. "Father Benitot!" he appealed. "Father Benitot!"

Some one, drawn by the cry, was moving wreckage near them. A hand and arm with a torn sleeve showed; Alan could not see the rest of the figure, but by the sleeve he recognized that it was the mate.

"Who's caught here?" he called down.

"Benjamin Corvet of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman, ship owners of Chicago," Corvet's voice replied deeply, fully; there was authority in it and wonder too — the wonder of a man finding himself in a situation which his recollection cannot explain.

"Ben Corvet!" the mate shouted in surprise; he cried it to the others, those who had followed Corvet and obeyed him during the hour before and had not known why. The mate tried to pull the wreckage aside and make his way to Corvet; but the old man stopped him. "The priest, Father Benitot! Send him to me. I shall never leave here; send Father Benitot!"

The word was passed without the mate moving away. The mate, after a minute, made no further attempt to free Corvet; that indeed was useless, and Corvet demanded his right of sacrament from the priest who came and crouched under the wreckage beside him.

"Father Benitot!"

"I am not Father Benitot. I am Father Perron of L'Anse."

"It was to Father Benitot of St. Ignace I should have gone, Father! . . ."

The priest got a little closer as Corvet spoke, and Alan heard only voices now and then through the sounds of clanging metal and the drum of ice against the hull. The mate and his helpers were working to get him free. They had abandoned all effort to save the ship; it was settling. And with the settling, the movement of the wreckage imprisoning Alan was increasing. This movement made useless the efforts of the mate; it would free Alan of itself in a moment, if it did not kill him; it would free or finish Corvet too. But he, as Alan saw him, was wholly oblivious of that now. His lips moved quietly, firmly; and his eyes were fixed steadily on the eyes of the priest.

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. SPEARMAN GOES NORTH

THE message, in blurred lettering and upon the flimsy tissue paper of a carbon copy — that message which had brought tension to the offices of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman and had called Constance Sherrill and her mother downtown where further information could be more quickly obtained — was handed to Constance by a clerk as soon as she entered her father's office. She reread it; it already had been repeated to her over the telephone.

"4:05 A. M. Frankfort Wireless station has received following message from No. 25: 'We have Benjamin Corvet, of Chicago, aboard.'"

"You've received nothing later than this?" she asked.

"Nothing regarding Mr. Corvet, Miss Sherrill," the clerk replied.

"Or regarding — Have you obtained a passenger list?"

"No passenger list was kept, Miss Sherrill."

"The crew?"

"Yes; we have just got the names of the crew." He took another copied sheet from among the pages and handed it to her, and she looked swiftly down the list of names until she found that of Alan Conrad.

Her eyes filled, blinding her, as she put the paper

down, and began to take off her things. She had been clinging determinedly in her thought to the belief that Alan might not have been aboard the ferry. Alan's message, which had sent her father north to meet the ship, had implied plainly that some one whom Alan believed might be Uncle Benny was on Number 25; she had been fighting, these last few hours, against conviction that therefore Alan must be on the ferry too.

She stood by the desk, as the clerk went out, looking through the papers which he had left with her.

"What do they say?" her mother asked.

Constance caught herself together.

"Wireless signals from No. 25," she read aloud, "were plainly made out at shore stations at Ludington, Manitowoc, and Frankfort until about four o'clock, when —"

"That is, until about six hours ago, Constance."

"Yes, mother, when the signals were interrupted. The steamer *Richardson*, in response to whose signals No. 25 made the change in her course which led to disaster, was in communication until about four o'clock; Frankfort station picked up one message shortly after four, and same message was also recorded by Carferry Manitoulin in southern end of lake; subsequently all efforts to call No. 25 failed of response until 4:35 when a message was picked up at once by Manitowoc, Frankfort, and the *Richardson*. Information, therefore, regarding the fate of the ferry up to that hour received at this office (Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman) consists of the following . . ."

Constance stopped reading aloud and looked rapidly down the sheet and then over the next. What she was reading was the carbon of the report prepared that

morning and sent, at his rooms, to Henry, who was not yet down. It did not contain therefore the last that was known; and she read only enough of it to be sure of that.

"After 4:10, to repeated signals to Number 25 from *Richardson* and shore stations —'Are you in danger?' 'Shall we send help?' 'Are you jettisoning cars?' 'What is your position?'—no replies were received. The *Richardson* continued therefore to signal, 'Report your position and course; we will stand by,' at the same time making full speed toward last position given by Number 25. At 4:35, no other message having been obtained from Number 25 in the meantime, Manitowoc and Frankfort both picked up the following: 'S. O. S. Are taking water fast. S. O. S. Position probably twenty miles west N. Fox. S. O. S.' The S. O. S. has been repeated, but without further information since."

The report made to Henry ended here. Constance picked up the later messages received in response to orders to transmit to Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman copies of all signals concerning Number 25 which had been received or sent. She sorted out from them those dated after the hour she just had read:

"4:40, Manitowoc is calling No. 25, 'No. 26 is putting north to you. Keep in touch.'

"4:43, No. 26 is calling No. 25, 'What is your position?'

"4:50, the *Richardson* is calling No. 25, 'We must be approaching you. Are you giving whistle signals?'

"4:53, No. 25 is replying to *Richardson*, 'Yes ; will continue to signal. Do you hear us?'

"4:59, Frankfort is calling No. 25, 'What is your condition?'

"5:04, No. 25 is replying to Frankfort, 'Holding bare headway; stern very low.'

"5:10, No. 26 is calling No. 25, 'Are you throwing off cars?'

"5:14, Petoskey is calling Manitowoc, 'We are receiving S.O.S. What is wrong?' Petoskey has not previously been in communication with shore stations or ships.

"5:17, No. 25 is signalling No. 26, 'Are throwing off cars; have cleared eight; work very difficult. We are sinking.'

"5:20, No. 25 is calling the *Richardson*, 'Watch for small boats. Position doubtful because of snow and changes of course; probably due west N. Fox, twenty to thirty miles.'

"5:24, No. 26 is calling No. 25, 'Are you abandoning ship?'

"5:27, No. 25 is replying to No. 26, 'Second boat just getting safely away with passengers; first boat was smashed. Six passengers in second boat, two injured of crew, cabin maid, boy and two men.'

"5:30, Manitowoc and Frankfort are calling No. 25, 'Are you abandoning ship?'

"5:34, No. 25 is replying to Manitowoc, 'Still trying to clear cars; everything is loose below . . .'

"5:40, Frankfort is calling Manitowoc, 'Do you get anything now?'

"5:45, Manitowoc is calling the *Richardson*, 'Do you get anything? Signals have stopped here.'

"5:48, The *Richardson* is calling Petoskey, 'We get nothing now. Do you?'

"6:30, Petoskey is calling Manitowoc, 'Signals after becoming indistinct, failed entirely about 5:45,

probably by failure of ship's power to supply current. Operator appears to have remained at key. From 5:25 to 5:43 we received disconnected messages, as follows: 'Have cleared another car . . . they are sticking to it down there . . . engine-room crew is also sticking . . . hell on car deck . . . everything smashed . . . they won't give up . . . sinking now . . . we're going . . . good-by . . . stuck to end . . . all they could . . . know that . . . hand it to them . . . have cleared another car . . . sink . . . S. O. . . . Signals then entirely ceased.'"

There was no more than this. Constance let the papers fall back upon the desk and looked to her mother; Mrs. Sherrill loosened her fur collar and sat back, breathing more comfortably. Constance quickly shifted her gaze and, trembling and with head erect, she walked to the window and looked out. The meaning of what she had read was quite clear; her mother was formulating it.

"So they are both lost, Mr. Corvet and his — son," Mrs. Sherrill said quietly.

Constance did not reply, either to refuse or to concur in the conclusion. There was not anything which was meant to be merciless in that conclusion; her mother simply was crediting what probably had occurred. Constance could not in reason refuse to accept it too; yet she was refusing it. She had not realized, until these reports of the wireless messages told her that he was gone, what companionship with Alan had come to mean to her. She had accepted it as always to be existent, somehow — a companionship which might be interrupted often but always to be formed again. It amazed her to find how firm a place

he had found in her world of those close to her with whom she must always be intimately concerned.

Her mother arose and came beside her. "May it not be better, Constance, that it has happened this way?"

"Better!" Constance cried. She controlled herself.

It was only what Henry had said to her months ago when Alan had left her in the north in the search which had resulted in the finding of Uncle Benny — "Might it not be better for him not to find out?" Henry, who could hazard more accurately than any one else the nature of that strange secret which Alan now must have "found out," had believed it; her mother, who at least had lived longer in the world than she, also believed it. There came before Constance the vision of Alan's defiance and refusal to accept the stigma suggested in her father's recital to him of his relationship to Mr. Corvet. There came to her sight of him as he had tried to keep her from entering Uncle Benny's house when Luke was there, and then her waiting with him through the long hour and his dismissal of her, his abnegation of their friendship. And at that time his disgrace was indefinite; last night had he learned something worse than he had dreaded?

The words of his telegram took for her more terrible significance for the moment. "Have some one who knew Mr. Corvet well enough to recognize him even if greatly changed meet . . ." Were the broken, incoherent words of the wireless the last that she should hear of him, and of Uncle Benny, after that? "They are sticking to it . . . down there . . . they won't give up . . . sinking . . . they have cleared another

car . . . sink . . ." Had it come as the best way for them both?

"The *Richardson* is searching for boats, mother," Constance returned steadily, "and Number 26 must be there too by now."

Her mother looked to the storm. Outside the window which overlooked the lake from two hundred feet above the street, the sleet-like snow was driving ceaselessly; all over the western basin of the great lakes, as Constance knew — over Huron, over Michigan, and Superior — the storm was established. Its continuance and severity had claimed a front-page column in the morning papers. Duluth that morning had reported temperature of eighteen below zero and fierce snow; at Marquette it was fifteen below; there was driving snow at the Soo, at Mackinac, and at all ports along both shores. She pictured little boats, at the last moment, getting away from the ferry, deep-laden with injured and exhausted men; how long might those men live in open boats in a gale and with cold like that? The little clock upon her father's desk marked ten o'clock; they had been nearly five hours in the boats now, those men.

Constance knew that as soon as anything new was heard, it would be brought to her; yet, with a word to her mother, she went from her father's room and down the corridor into the general office. A hush of expectancy held this larger room; the clerks moved silently and spoke to one another in low voices; she recognized in a little group of men gathered in a corner of the room some officers of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman's ships. Others among them, whom she did not know, were plainly seamen too — men who knew "Ben" Cor-

vet and who, on hearing he was on the ferry, had come in to learn what more was known; the business men and clubmen, friends of Corvet's later life, had not heard it yet. There was a restrained, professional attentiveness among these seamen, as of those in the presence of an event which any day might happen to themselves. They were listening to the clerk who had compiled the report, who was telephoning now, and Constance, waiting, listened too to learn what he might be hearing. But he put down the receiver as he saw her.

"Nothing more, Miss Sherrill," he reported. "The *Richardson* has wirelessed that she reached the reported position of the sinking about half-past six o'clock. She is searching but has found nothing."

"She's keeping on searching, though?"

"Yes; of course."

"It's still snowing there?"

"Yes, Miss Sherrill. We've had a message from your father. He has gone on to Manistique; it's more likely that wreckage or survivors will be brought in there."

The telephone switchboard beside Constance suddenly buzzed, and the operator, plugging in a connection, said: "Yes, sir; at once," and through the partitions of the private office on the other side, a man's heavy tones came to Constance. That was Henry's office and, in timbre, the voice was his, but it was so strange in other characteristics of expression that she waited an instant before saying to the clerk,

"Mr. Spearman has come in?"

The clerk hesitated, but the continuance of the tone from the other side of the partition made reply superfluous. "Yes, Miss Sherrill."

"Did you tell him that mother and I were here?"

The clerk considered again before deciding to reply in the affirmative. There evidently was some trouble with the telephone number which Henry had called; the girl at the switchboard was apologizing in frightened panic, and Henry's voice, loud and abusive, came more plainly through the partition. Constance started to give an instruction to the clerk; then, as the abuse burst out again, she changed her plan and went to Henry's door and rapped. Whether no one else rapped in that way or whether he realized that she might have come into the general office, she did not know; but at once his voice was still. He made no answer and no move to open the door; so, after waiting a moment, she turned the knob and went in.

Henry was seated at his desk, facing her, his big hands before him; one of them held the telephone receiver. He lifted it slowly and put it upon the hook beside the transmitter as he watched her with steady, silent, aggressive scrutiny. His face was flushed a little — not much; his hair was carefully brushed, and there was something about his clean-shaven appearance and the set of his perfectly fitting coat, one which he did not ordinarily wear to business, which seemed studied. He did not rise; only after a moment he recollected that he had not done so and came to his feet. "Good morning, Connie," he said. "Come in. What's the news?"

There was something strained and almost menacing in his voice and in his manner which halted her. She in some way — or her presence at that moment — appeared to be definitely disturbing him. It frightened him, she would have thought, except that the idea was

a contradiction. Henry frightened? But if he was not, what emotion now controlled him?

The impulse which had brought her into his office went from her. She had not seen nor heard from Henry directly since before Alan's telegram had come late yesterday afternoon; she had heard from her father only that he had informed Henry; that was all.

"I've no news, Henry," she said. "Have you?" She closed the door behind her before moving closer to him. She had not known what he had been doing, since he had heard of Alan's telegram; but she had supposed that he was in some way coöperating with her father, particularly since word had come of the disaster to the ferry.

"How did you happen to be here, Connie?" he asked.

She made no reply but gazed at him, studying him. The agitation which he was trying to conceal was not entirely consequent to her coming in upon him; it had been ruling him before. It had underlain the loudness and abuse of his words which she had overheard. That was no capricious outburst of temper or irritation; it had come from something which had seized and held him in suspense, in dread — in dread; there was no other way to define her impression to herself. When she had opened the door and come in, he had looked up in dread, as though preparing himself for whatever she might announce. Now that the door shut them in alone, he approached her with arms offered. She stepped back, instinctively avoiding his embrace; and he stopped at once, but he had come quite close to her now.

That she had detected faintly the smell of liquor

about him was not the whole reason for her drawing back. He was not drunk; he was quite himself so far as any influence of that kind was concerned. Long ago, when he was a young man on the boats, he had drunk a good deal; he had confessed to her once; but he had not done so for years. Since she had known him, he had been among the most careful of her friends; it was for "efficiency" he had said. The drink was simply a part — indeed, only a small part — of the subtle strangeness and peculiarity she marked in him. If he had been drinking now, it was, she knew, no temptation, no capricious return to an old appetite. If not appetite, then it was for the effect — to brace himself. Against what? Against the thing for which he had prepared himself when she came upon him?

As she stared at him, the clerk's voice came to her suddenly over the partition which separated the office from the larger room where the clerk was receiving some message over the telephone. Henry straightened, listened; as the voice stopped, his great, finely shaped head sank between his shoulders; he fumbled in his pocket for a cigar, and his big hands shook as he lighted it, without word of excuse to her. A strange feeling came to her that he felt what he dreaded approaching and was no longer conscious of her presence.

She heard footsteps in the larger room coming toward the office door. Henry was in suspense. A rap came at the door. He whitened and took the cigar from his mouth and wet his lips.

"Come in," he summoned.

One of the office girls entered, bringing a white page of paper with three or four lines of purple typewriting

upon it which Constance recognized must be a transcript of a message just received.

She started forward at sight of it, forgetting everything else; but he took the paper as though he did not know she was there. He merely held it until the girl had gone out; even then he stood folding and unfolding it, and his eyes did not drop to the sheet.

The girl had said nothing at all but, having seen her, Constance was athrill; the girl had not been a bearer of bad news, that was sure; she brought some sort of good news! Constance, certain of it, moved nearer to Henry to read what he held. He looked down and read.

"What is it, Henry?"

His muscular reaction, as he read, had drawn the sheet away from her; he recovered himself almost instantly and gave the paper to her; but, in that instant, Constance herself was "prepared." She must have deceived herself the instant before! This bulletin must be something dismaying to what had remained of hope.

"8:35 A. M., Manitowoc, Wis.," she read. "The schooner *Anna S. Solwerk* has been sighted making for this port. She is not close enough for communication, but two lifeboats, additional to her own, can be plainly made out. It is believed that she must have picked up survivors of No. 25. She carries no wireless, so is unable to report. Tugs are going out to her."

"Two lifeboats!" Constance cried. "That could mean that they all are saved or nearly all; doesn't it, Henry; doesn't it?"

He had read some other significance in it, she thought, or, from his greater understanding of con-

ditions in the storm, he had been able to hold no hope from what had been reported. That was the only way she could explain to herself as he replied to her; that the word meant to him that men were saved and that therefore it was dismaying to him, could not come to her at once. When it came now, it went over her first only in the flash of incredulous question.

"Yes," he said to her. "Yes." And he went out of the room to the outer office. She turned and watched him and then followed to the door. He had gone to the desk of the girl who had brought him the bulletin, and Constance heard his voice, strained and queerly unnatural. "Call Manitowoc on the long distance. Get the harbor master. Get the names of the people that the *Solwerk* picked up."

He stayed beside the girl while she started the call. "Put them on my wire when you get them," he commanded and turned back to his office. "Keep my wire clear for that."

Constance retreated into the room as he approached. He did not want her there now, she knew; for that reason — if she yet definitely understood no other — she meant to remain. If he asked her to go, she intended to stay; but he did not ask her. He wished her to go away; in every word which he spoke to her, in every moment of their silent waiting, was his desire to escape her; but he dared not — dared not — go about that directly.

The feeling of that flashed over her to her stupefaction. Henry and she were waiting for word of the fate of Uncle Benny and Alan, and waiting opposed! She was no longer doubting it as she watched him; she was trying to understand. The telephone buzzer

under his desk sounded; she drew close as he took up his receiver.

"Manitowoc?" he said. "I want to know what you've heard from the *Solwerk*. . . . You hear me? . . . The men the *Solwerk* picked up. You have the names yet?"

". . ."

"The *Benton*?"

". . ."

"Oh, I understand! All from the *Benton*. I see! . . . No; never mind their names. How about Number 25? Nothing more heard from them?"

Constance had caught his shoulder while he was speaking and now clung to it. Release — release of strain was going through him; she could feel it, and she heard it in his tones and saw it in his eyes.

"The steamer Number 25 rammed proves to have been the *Benton*," he told her. "The men are all from her. They had abandoned her in the small boats, and the *Solwerk* picked them up before the ferry found her."

He was not asking her to congratulate him upon the relief he felt; he had not so far forgotten himself as that. But it was plain to her that he was congratulating himself; it had been fear that he was feeling before — fear, she was beginning to understand, that those on the ferry had been saved. She shrank a little away from him. Benjamin Corvet had not been a friend of Henry's — they had quarreled; Uncle Benny had caused trouble; but nothing which she had understood could explain fear on Henry's part lest Uncle Benny should be found safe. Henry had not welcomed Alan; but now Henry was hoping that Alan was dead.

Henry's words to her in the north, after Alan had seen her there, iterated themselves to her: "I told that fellow Conrad not to keep stirring up these matters about Ben Corvet. . . . Conrad doesn't know what he'll turn up; I don't know either. But it's not going to be anything pleasant. . . ." Only a few minutes ago she had still thought of these words as spoken only for Alan's sake and for Uncle Benny's; now she could not think of them so. This fear of news from the north could not be for their sake; it was for Henry's own. Had all the warnings been for Henry's sake too?

Horror and amazement flowed in upon her with her realization of this in the man she had promised to marry; and he seemed now to appreciate the effect he was producing upon her. He tried obviously to pull himself together; he could not do that fully; yet he managed a manner assertive of his right over her.

"Connie," he cried to her, "Connie!"

She drew back from him as he approached her; she was not yet consciously denying his right. What was controlling him, what might underlie his hope that they were dead, she could not guess; she could not think or reason about that now; what she felt was only overwhelming desire to be away from him where she could think connectedly. For an instant she stared at him, all her body tense; then, as she turned and went out, he followed her, again calling her name. But, seeing the seamen in the larger office, he stopped, and she understood he was not willing to urge himself upon her in their presence.

She crossed the office swiftly; in the corridor she stopped to compose herself before she met her mother.

She heard Henry's voice speaking to one of the clerks, and flushed hotly with horror. Could she be certain of anything about him now? Could she be certain even that news which came through these employees of his would not be kept from her or only so much given her as would serve Henry's purpose and enable him to conceal from her the reason for his fear? She pushed the door open.

"I'm willing to go home now, mother, if you wish," she said steadily.

Her mother arose at once. "There is no more news, Constance?"

"No; a schooner has picked up the crew of the ship the ferry rammed; that is all."

She followed her mother, but stopped in the anteroom beside the desk of her father's private secretary.

"You are going to be here all day, Miss Bennet?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Sherrill."

"Will you please try to see personally all messages which come to Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman, or to Mr. Spearman about the men from Number 25, and telephone them to me yourself?"

"Certainly, Miss Sherrill."

When they had gone down to the street and were in the car, Constance leaned back, closing her eyes; she feared her mother might wish to talk with her. The afternoon papers were already out with news of the loss of the ferry; Mrs. Sherrill stopped the car and bought one, but Constance looked at it only enough to make sure that the reporters had been able to discover nothing more than she already knew; the newspaper reference to Henry was only as to the partner of the

great Chicago ship owner, Benjamin Corvet, who might be lost with the ship.

She called Miss Bennet as soon as she reached home; but nothing more had been received. Toward three o'clock, Miss Bennet called her, but only to report that the office had heard again from Mr. Sherrill. He had wired that he was going on from Manistique and would cross the Straits from St. Ignace; messages from him were to be addressed to Petoskey. He had given no suggestion that he had news; and there was no other report except that vessels were still continuing the search for survivors, because the Indian Drum, which had been beating, was beating "short," causing the superstitious to be certain that, though some of the men from Number 25 were lost, some yet survived.

Constance thrilled as she heard that. She did not believe in the Drum; at least she had never thought she had really believed in it; she had only stirred to the idea of its being true. But if the Drum was beating, she was glad it was beating short. It was serving, at least, to keep the lake men more alert. She wondered what part the report of the Drum might have played in her father's movements. None, probably; for he, of course, did not believe in the Drum. His move was plainly dictated by the fact that, with the western gale, drift from the ferry would be toward the eastern shore.

A little later, as Constance stood at the window, gazing out at the snow upon the lake, she drew back suddenly out of sight from the street, as she saw Henry's roadster appear out of the storm and stop before the house.

She had been apprehensively certain that he would come to her some time during the day; he had been too

fully aware of the effect he made upon her not to attempt to remove that effect as soon as he could. As he got out of the car, shaking the snowflakes from his great fur coat and from his cap, looking up at the house before he came in and not knowing that he was observed, she saw something very like triumph in his manner. Her pulses stopped, then raced, at that; triumph for him! That meant, if he brought news, it was good news for him; it must be then, bad news for her.

She waited in the room where she was. She heard him in the hall, taking off his coat and speaking to the servant, and he appeared then at the door. The strain he was under had not lessened, she could see; or rather, if she could trust her feeling at sight of him, it had lessened only slightly, and at the same time his power to resist it had been lessening too. His hands and even his body shook; but his head was thrust forward, and he stared at her aggressively, and, plainly, he had determined in advance to act toward her as though their relationship had not been disturbed.

"I thought you'd want to know, Connie," he said, "so I came straight out. The *Richardson's* picked up one of the boats from the ferry."

"Uncle Benny and Alan Conrad were not in it," she returned; the triumph she had seen in him had told her that.

"No; it was the first boat put off by the ferry, with the passengers and cabin maid and some injured men of the crew."

"Were they — alive?" her voice hushed tensely.

"Yes; that is, they were able to revive them all; but it didn't seem possible to the *Richardson's* officers that

any one could be revived who had been exposed much longer than that; so the *Richardson's* given up the search, and some of the other ships that were searching have given up too, and gone on their course."

"When did you hear that, Henry? I was just speaking with the office."

"A few minutes ago; a news wire got it before any one else; it didn't come through the office."

"I see; how many were in the boat?"

"Twelve, Connie."

"Then all the vessels up there won't give up yet!"

"Why not?"

"I was just talking with Miss Bennet, Henry; she's heard again from the other end of the lake. The people up there say the Drum is beating, but it's beating short still!"

"Short!"

She saw Henry stiffen. "Yes," she said swiftly. "They say the Drum began sounding last night, and that at first it sounded for only two lives; it's kept on beating, but still is beating only for four. There were thirty-nine on the ferry — seven passengers and thirty-two crew. Twelve have been saved now; so until the Drum raises the beats to twenty-seven there is still a chance that some one will be saved."

Henry made no answer; his hands fumbled purposelessly with the lapels of his coat, and his bloodshot eyes wandered uncertainly. Constance watched him with wonder at the effect of what she had told. When she had asked him once about the Drum, he had professed the same scepticism which she had; but he had not held it; at least he was not holding it now. The news of the Drum had shaken him from his triumph

over Alan and Uncle Benny and over her. It had shaken him so that, though he remained with her some minutes more, he seemed to have forgotten the purpose of reconciliation with her which had brought him to the house. When a telephone call took her out of the room, she returned to find him gone to the dining-room; she heard a decanter clink there against a glass. He did not return to her again, but she heard him go. The entrance door closed after him, and the sound of his starting motor came. Then alarm, stronger even than that she had felt during the morning, rushed upon her.

She dined, or made a pretence of dining, with her mother at seven. Her mother's voice went on and on about trifles, and Constance did not try to pay attention. Her thought was following Henry with ever sharpening apprehension. She called the office in mid-evening; it would be open, she knew, for messages regarding Uncle Benny and Alan would be expected there. A clerk answered; no other news had been received; she then asked Henry's whereabouts.

"Mr. Spearman went north late this afternoon, Miss Sherrill," the clerk informed her.

"North? Where?"

"We are to communicate with him this evening to Grand Rapids; after that, to Petoskey."

Constance could hear her own heart beat. Why had Henry gone, she wondered; not, certainly, to aid the search. Had he gone to — hinder it?

CHAPTER XIX

THE WATCH UPON THE BEACH

CONSTANCE went up to her own rooms; she could hear her mother speaking, in a room on the same floor, to one of the maids; but for her present anxiety, her mother offered no help and could not even be consulted. Nor could any message she might send to her father explain the situation to him. She was throbbing with determination and action, as she found her purse and counted the money in it. She never in her life had gone alone upon an extended journey, much less been alone upon a train over night. If she spoke of such a thing now, she would be prevented; no occasion for it would be recognized; she would not be allowed to go, even if "properly accompanied." She could not, therefore, risk taking a handbag from the house; so she thrust nightdress and toilet articles into her muff and the roomy pocket of her fur coat. She descended to the side door of the house and, unobserved, let herself out noiselessly on to the carriage drive. She gained the street and turned westward at the first corner to a street car which would take her to the railway station.

There was a train to the north every evening; it was not, she knew, such a train as ran in the resort season, and she was not certain of the exact time of its de-

parture; but she would be in time for it. The manner of buying a railway ticket and of engaging a berth were unknown to her — there had been servants always to do these things — but she watched others and did as they did. On the train, the berths had been made up; people were going to bed behind some of the curtains. She procured a telegraph blank and wrote a message to her mother, telling her that she had gone north to join her father. When the train had started, she gave the message to the porter, directing him to send it from the first large town at which they stopped.

She left the light burning in its little niche at the head of the berth; she had no expectation that she could sleep; shut in by the green curtains, she drew the covers up about her and stared upward at the paneled face of the berth overhead. Then new frightened distrust of the man she had been about to marry flowed in upon her and became all her thought.

She had not promised Uncle Benny that she would not marry Henry; her promise had been that she would not engage herself to that marriage until she had seen Uncle Benny again. Uncle Benny's own act — his disappearance — had prevented her from seeing him; for that reason she had broken her promise; and, from its breaking, something terrifying, threatening to herself had come. She had been amazed at what she had seen in Henry; but she was appreciating now that, strangely, in her thought of him there was no sense of loss to herself. Her feeling of loss, of something gone from her which could not be replaced, was for Alan. She had had admiration for Henry, pride in him; had she mistaken what was merely admiration for love? She had been about to marry him; had it been

only his difference from the other men she knew that had made her do that? Unconsciously to herself, had she been growing to love Alan?

Constance could not, as yet, place Henry's part in the strange circumstances which had begun to reveal themselves with Alan's coming to Chicago; but Henry's hope that Uncle Benny and Alan were dead was beginning to make that clearer. She lay without voluntary movement in her berth, but her bosom was shaking with the thoughts which came to her.

Twenty years before, some dreadful event had altered Uncle Benny's life; his wife had known — or had learned — enough of that event so that she had left him. It had seemed to Constance and her father, therefore, that it must have been some intimate and private event. They had been confirmed in believing this, when Uncle Benny, in madness or in fear, had gone away, leaving everything he possessed to Alan Conrad. But Alan's probable relationship to Uncle Benny had not been explanation; she saw now that it had even been misleading. For a purely private event in Uncle Benny's life — even terrible scandal — could not make Henry fear, could not bring terror of consequences to himself. That could be only if Henry was involved in some peculiar and intimate way with what had happened to Uncle Benny. If he feared Uncle Benny's being found alive and feared Alan's being found alive too, now that Alan had discovered Uncle Benny, it was because he dreaded explanation of his own connection with what had taken place.

Constance raised her window shade slightly and looked out. It was still snowing; the train was running swiftly among low sand hills, snow-covered, and

only dimly visible through snow and dark. A deep-toned, steady roar came to her above the noises of the train. The lake! Out there, Alan and Uncle Benny were fighting, still struggling perhaps, against bitter cold and ice and rushing water for their lives. She must not think of that!

Uncle Benny had withdrawn himself from men; he had ceased to be active in his business and delegated it to others. This change had been strangely advantageous to Henry. Henry had been hardly more than a common seaman then. He had been a mate — the mate on one of Uncle Benny's ships. Quite suddenly he had become Uncle Benny's partner. Henry had explained this to her by saying that Uncle Benny had felt madness coming on him and had selected him as the one to take charge. But Uncle Benny had not trusted Henry; he had been suspicious of him; he had quarreled with him. How strange, then, that Uncle Benny should have advanced and given way to a man whom he could not trust!

It was strange, too, that if — as Henry had said — their quarrels had been about the business, Uncle Benny had allowed Henry to remain in control.

Their quarrels had culminated on the day that Uncle Benny went away. Afterward Uncle Benny had come to her and warned her not to marry Henry; then he had sent for Alan. There had been purpose in these acts of Uncle Benny's; had they meant that Uncle Benny had been on the verge of making explanation — that explanation which Henry feared — and that he had been — prevented? Her father had thought this; at least, he had thought that Uncle Benny must have left some explanation in his house. He had told Alan that,

and had given Alan the key to the house so that he could find it. Alan had gone to the house —

In the house Alan had found some one who had mistaken him for a ghost, a man who had cried out at sight of him something about a ship — about the *Miwaka*, the ship of whose loss no one had known anything except by the sounding of the Drum. What had the man been doing in the house? Had he too been looking for the explanation — the explanation that Henry feared? Alan had described the man to her; that description had not had meaning for her before; but now remembering that description she could think of Henry as the only one who could have been in that house! Henry had fought with Alan there! Afterwards, when Alan had been attacked upon the street, had Henry anything to do with that?

Henry had lied to her about being in Duluth the night he had fought with Alan; he had not told her the true cause of his quarrels with Uncle Benny; he had wished her to believe that Uncle Benny was dead when the wedding ring and watch came to her — the watch which had been Captain Stafford's of the *Miwaka!* Henry had urged her to marry him at once. Was that because he wished the security that her father — and she — must give her husband when they learned the revelation which Alan or Uncle Benny might bring?

If so, then that revelation had to do with the *Miwaka.* It was of the *Miwaka* that Henry had cried out to Alan in the house; they were the names of the next of kin of those on the *Miwaka* that Uncle Benny had kept. That was beginning to explain to her something of the effect on Henry of the report that the

Drum was telling that some on Ferry Number 25 were alive, and why he had hurried north because of that. The Drum — so superstition had said — had beat the roll of those who died with the *Miwaka;* had beaten for all but one! No one of those who accepted the superstition had ever been able to explain that; but Henry could! He knew something more about the *Miwaka* than others knew. He had encountered the *Miwaka* somehow or encountered some one saved from the *Miwaka;* he knew, then, that the Drum had beaten correctly for the *Miwaka*, that one was spared as the Drum had told! Who had that one been? Alan? And was he now among those for whom the Drum had not yet beat?

She recalled that, on the day when the *Miwaka* was lost, Henry and Uncle Benny had been upon the lake in a tug. Afterwards Uncle Benny had grown rich; Henry had attained advancement and wealth. Her reasoning had brought her to the verge of a terrible discovery. If she could take one more step forward in her thought, it would make her understand it all. But she could not yet take that step.

In the morning, at Traverse City — where she got a cup of coffee and some toast in the station eating house — she had to change to a day coach. It had grown still more bitterly cold; the wind which swept the long brick-paved platform of the station was arctic; and even through the double windows of the day coach she could feel its chill. The points of Grand Traverse Bay were frozen across; frozen across too was Torch Lake; to north of that, ice, snow-covered, through which frozen rushes protruded, marked the long chain of little lakes known as the "Intermediates." The little

towns and villages, and the rolling fields with their leafless trees or blackened stumps, lay under drifts. It had stopped snowing, however, and she found relief in that; searchers upon the lake could see small boats now — if there were still small boats to be seen.

To the people in her Pullman, the destruction of the ferry had been only a news item competing for interest with other news on the front pages of their newspapers; but to these people in the day coach, it was an intimate and absorbing thing. They spoke by name of the crew as of persons whom they knew. A white lifeboat, one man told her, had been seen south of Beaver Island; another said there had been two boats. They had been far off from shore, but, according to the report cabled from Beaver, there had appeared to be men in them; the men — her informant's voice hushed slightly — had not been rowing. Constance shuddered. She had heard of things like that on the quick-freezing fresh water of the lakes — small boats adrift crowded with men sitting upright in them, ice-coated, frozen, lifeless!

Petoskey, with its great hotels closed and boarded up, and its curio shops closed and locked, was blocked with snow. She went from the train directly to the telegraph office. If Henry was in Petoskey, they would know at that office where he could be found; he would be keeping in touch with them. The operator in charge of the office knew her, and his manner became still more deferential when she asked after Henry.

Mr. Spearman, the man said, had been at the office early in the day; there had been no messages for him; he had left instructions that any which came were to be forwarded to him through the men who, under his direc-

tion, were patroling the shore for twenty miles north of Little Traverse, watching for boats. The operator added to the report she had heard upon the train. One lifeboat and perhaps two had been seen by a farmer who had been on the ice to the south of Beaver; the second boat had been far to the south and west of the first one; tugs were cruising there now; it had been many hours, however, after the farmer had seen the boats before he had been able to get word to the town at the north end of the island — St. James — so that the news could be cabled to the mainland. Fishermen and seamen, therefore, regarded it as more likely, from the direction and violence of the gale, that the boats, if they continued to float, would be drifted upon the mainland than that they would be found by the tugs.

Constance asked after her father. Mr. Sherrill and Mr. Spearman, the operator told her, had been in communication that morning; Mr. Sherrill had not come to Petoskey; he had taken charge of the watch along the shore at its north end. It was possible that the boats might drift in there; but men of experience considered it more probable that the boats would drift in farther south where Mr. Spearman was in charge.

Constance crossed the frozen edges of the bay by sledge to Harbor Point. The driver mentioned Henry with admiration and with pride in his acquaintance with him; it brought vividly to her the recollection that Henry's rise in life was a matter of personal congratulation to these people as lending luster to the neighborhood and to themselves. Henry's influence here was far greater than her own or her father's; if she were to move against Henry or show him distrust, she must work alone; she could enlist no aid from these.

And her distrust now had deepened to terrible dread. She had not been able before this to form any definite idea of how Henry could threaten Alan and Uncle Benny; she had imagined only vague interference and obstruction of the search for them; she had not foreseen that he could so readily assume charge of the search and direct, or misdirect, it.

At the Point she discharged the sledge and went on foot to the house of the caretaker who had charge of the Sherrill cottage during the winter. Getting the keys from him, she let herself into the house. The electric light had been cut off, and the house was darkened by shutters, but she found a lamp and lit it. Going to her room, she unpacked a heavy sweater and woolen cap and short fur coat — winter things which were left there against use when they opened the house sometimes out of season — and put them on. Then she went down and found her snowshoes. Stopping at the telephone, she called long distance and asked them to locate Mr. Sherrill, if possible, and instruct him to move south along the shore with whomever he had with him. She went out then, and fastened on her snowshoes.

It had grown late. The early December dusk — the second dusk since little boats had put off from Number 25 — darkened the snow-locked land. The wind from the west cut like a knife, even through her fur coat. The pine trees moaned and bent, with loud whistlings of the wind among their needles; the leafless elms and maples crashed their limbs together; above the clamor of all other sounds, the roaring of the lake came to her, the booming of the waves against the ice, the shatter of floe on floe. No snow had fallen for a few hours,

and the sky was even clearing; ragged clouds scurried before the wind and, opening, showed the moon.

Constance hurried westward and then north, following the bend of the shore. The figure of a man — one of the shore patrols — pacing the ice hummocks of the beach and staring out upon the lake, appeared vaguely in the dusk when she had gone about two miles. He seemed surprised at seeing a girl, but less surprised when he had recognized her. Mr. Spearman, he told her, was to the north of them upon the beach somewhere, he did not know how far; he could not leave his post to accompany her, but he assured her that there were men stationed all along the shore. She came, indeed, three quarters of a mile farther on, to a second man; about an equal distance beyond, she found a third, but passed him and went on.

Her legs ached now with the unaccustomed travel upon snowshoes; the cold, which had been only a piercing chill at first, was stopping feeling, almost stopping thought. When clouds covered the moon, complete darkness came; she could go forward only slowly then or must stop and wait; but the intervals of moonlight were growing longer and increasing in frequency. As the sky cleared, she went forward quickly for many minutes at a time, straining her gaze westward over the tumbling water and the floes. It came to her with terrifying apprehension that she must have advanced at least three miles since she had seen the last patrol; she could not have passed any one in the moonlight without seeing him, and in the dark intervals she had advanced so little that she could not have missed one that way either.

She tried to go faster as she realized this; but now

travel had become more difficult. There was no longer any beach. High, precipitous bluffs, which she recognized as marking Seven Mile Point, descended here directly to the hummocked ice along the water's edge. She fell many times, traveling upon these hummocks; there were strange, treacherous places between the hummocks where, except for her snowshoes, she would have broken through. Her skirt was torn; she lost one of her gloves and could not stop to look for it; she fell again and sharp ice cut her ungloved hand and blood froze upon her finger tips. She did not heed any of these things.

She was horrified to find that she was growing weak, and that her senses were becoming confused. She mistook at times floating ice, metallic under the moonlight, for boats; her heart beat fast then while she scrambled part way up the bluff to gain better sight and so ascertained her mistake. Deep ravines at places broke the shores; following the bend of the bluffs, she got into these ravines and only learned her error when she found that she was departing from the shore. She had come, in all, perhaps eight miles; and she was "playing out"; other girls, she assured herself — other girls would not have weakened like this; they would have had strength to make certain no boats were there, or at least to get help. She had seen no houses; those, she knew, stood back from the shore, high upon the bluffs, and were not easy to find; but she scaled the bluff now and looked about for lights. The country was wild and wooded, and the moonlight showed only the white stretches of the shrouding snow.

She descended to the beach again and went on; her gaze continued to search the lake, but now, wherever

there was a break in the bluffs, she looked toward the shore as well. At the third of these breaks, the yellow glow of a window appeared, marking a house in a hollow between snow-shrouded hills. She turned eagerly that way; she could go only very slowly now. There was no path; at least, if there was, the snow drifts hid it. Through the drifts a thicket projected; the pines on the ravine sides overhead stood so close that only a silver tracery of the moonlight came through; beyond the pines, birch trees, stripped of their bark, stood black up to the white boughs.

Constance climbed over leafless briars and through brush and came upon a clearing perhaps fifty yards across, roughly crescent shaped, as it followed the configuration of the hills. Dead cornstalks, above the snow, showed ploughed ground; beyond that, a little, black cabin huddled in the further point of the crescent, and Constance gasped with disappointment as she saw it. She had expected a farmhouse; but this plainly was not even that. The framework was of logs or poles which had been partly boarded over; and above the boards and where they were lacking, black building paper had been nailed, secured by big tin discs. The rude, weather-beaten door was closed; smoke, however, came from a pipe stuck through the roof.

She struggled to the door and knocked upon it, and receiving no reply, she beat upon it with both fists.

"Who's here?" she cried. "Who's here?"

The door opened then a very little, and the frightened face of an Indian woman appeared in the crack. The woman evidently had expected — and feared — some arrival, and was reassured when she saw only a girl. She threw the door wider open, and bent to help

unfasten Constance's snowshoes; having done that, she led her in and closed the door.

Constance looked swiftly around the single room of the cabin. There was a cot on one side; there was a table, home carpentered; there were a couple of boxes for clothing or utensils. The stove, a good range once in the house of a prosperous farmer, had been bricked up by its present owners so as to hold fire. Dried onions and yellow ears of corn hung from the rafters; on the shelves were little birchbark canoes, woven baskets, and porcupine quill boxes of the ordinary sort made for the summer trade. Constance recognized the woman now as one who had come sometimes to the Point to sell such things, and who could speak fairly good English. The woman clearly had recognized Constance at once.

"Where is your man?" Constance had caught the woman's arm.

"They sent for him to the beach. A ship has sunk."

"Are there houses near here? You must run to one of them at once. Bring whoever you can get; or if you won't do that, tell me where to go."

The woman stared at her stolidly and moved away. "None near," she said. "Besides, you could not get somebody before some one will come."

"Who is that?"

"He is on the beach — Henry Spearman. He comes here to warm himself. It is nearly time he comes again."

"How long has he been about here?"

"Since before noon. Sit down. I will make you tea."

Constance gazed at her; the woman was plainly glad

of her coming. Her relief — relief from that fear she had been feeling when she opened the door — was very evident. It was Henry, then, who had frightened her.

The Indian woman set a chair for her beside the stove, and put water in a pan to heat; she shook tea leaves from a box into a bowl and brought a cup.

"How many on that ship?"

"Altogether there were thirty-nine," Constance replied.

"Some saved?"

"Yes; a boat was picked up yesterday morning with twelve."

The woman seemed making some computation which was difficult for her.

"Seven are living then," she said.

"Seven? What have you heard? What makes you think so?"

"That is what the Drum says."

The Drum! There was a Drum then! At least there was some sound which people heard and which they called the Drum. For the woman had heard it.

The woman shifted, checking something upon her fingers, while her lips moved; she was not counting, Constance thought; she was more likely aiding herself in translating something from Indian numeration into English. "Two, it began with," she announced. "Right away it went to nine. Sixteen then — that was this morning very early. Now, all day and to-night, it has been giving twenty. That leaves seven. It is not known who they may be."

She opened the door and looked out. The roar of the water and the wind, which had come loudly, increased, and with it the wood noises. The woman was

not looking about now, Constance realized; she was listening. Constance arose and went to the door too. The Drum! Blood prickled in her face and forehead; it prickled in her finger tips. The Drum was heard only, it was said, in time of severest storm; for that reason it was heard most often in winter. It was very seldom heard by any one in summer; and she was of the summer people. Sounds were coming from the woods now. Were these reverberations the roll of the Drum which beat for the dead? Her voice was uncontrolled as she asked the woman:

"Is that the Drum?"

The woman shook her head. "That's the trees."

Constance's shoulders shook convulsively together. When she had thought about the Drum — and when she had spoken of it with others who, themselves, never had heard it — they always had said that, if there were such a sound, it was trees. She herself had heard those strange wood noises, terrifying sometimes until their source was known — wailings like the cry of some one in anguish, which were caused by two crossed saplings rubbing together; thunderings, which were only some smaller trees beating against a great hollow trunk when a strong wind veered from a certain direction. But this Indian woman must know all such sounds well; and to her the Drum was something distinct from them. The woman specified that now.

"You'll know the Drum when you hear it."

Constance grew suddenly cold. For twenty lives, the woman said, the Drum had beat; that meant to her, and to Constance too now, that seven were left. Indefinite, desperate denial that all from the ferry must be dead — that denial which had been strengthened by the

news that at least one boat had been adrift near Beaver — altered in Constance to conviction of a boat with seven men from the ferry, seven dying, perhaps, but not yet dead. Seven out of twenty-seven! The score were gone; the Drum had beat for them in little groups as they had died. When the Drum beat again, would it beat beyond the score?

The woman drew back and closed the door; the water was hot now, and she made the tea and poured a cup for Constance. As she drank it, Constance was listening for the Drum; the woman too was listening. Having finished the tea, Constance returned to the door and reopened it; the sounds outside were the same. A solitary figure appeared moving along the edge of the ice — the figure of a tall man, walking on snowshoes; moonlight distorted the figure, and it was muffled too in a great coat which made it unrecognizable. He halted and stood looking out at the lake and then, with a sudden movement, strode on; he halted again, and now Constance got the knowledge that he was not looking; he was listening as she was. He was not merely listening; his body swayed and bent to a rhythm — he was counting something that he heard. Constance strained her ears; but she could hear no sound except those of the waters and the wind.

"Is the Drum sounding now?" she asked the woman.

"No."

Constance gazed again at the man and found his motion quite unmistakable; he was counting — if not counting something that he heard, or thought he heard, he was recounting and reviewing within himself something that he had heard before — some irregular rhythm which had become so much a part of him that it

sounded now continually within his own brain; so that, instinctively, he moved in cadence to it. He stepped forward again now, and turned toward the house.

Her breath caught as she spoke to the woman. "Mr. Spearman is coming here now!"

Her impulse was to remain where she was, lest he should think she was afraid of him; but realization came to her that there might be advantage in seeing him before he knew that she was there, so she reclosed the door and drew back into the cabin.

CHAPTER XX

THE SOUNDING OF THE DRUM

NOISES of the wind and the roaring of the lake made inaudible any sound of his approach to the cabin; she heard his snowshoes, however, scrape the cabin wall as, after taking them off, he leaned them beside the door. He thrust the door open then and came in; he did not see her at first and, as he turned to force the door shut again against the wind, she watched him quietly. She understood at once why the Indian woman had been afraid of him. His face was bloodless, yellow, and swollen-looking, his eyes bloodshot, his lips strained to a thin, straight line.

He saw her now and started and, as though sight of her confused him, he looked away from the woman and then back to Constance before he seemed certain of her.

"Hello!" he said tentatively. "Hello!"

"I'm here, Henry."

"Oh; you are! You are!" He stood drawn up, swaying a little as he stared at her; whiskey was upon his breath, and it became evident in the heat of the room; but whiskey could not account for this condition she witnessed in him. Neither could it conceal that condition; some turmoil and strain within him made him immune to its effects.

She had realized on her way up here what, vaguely, that strain within him must be. Guilt — guilt of some

awful sort connected him, and had connected Uncle Benny, with the *Miwaka* — the lost ship for which the Drum had beaten the roll of the dead. Now dread of revelation of that guilt had brought him here near to the Drum; he had been alone upon the beach twelve hours, the woman had said — listening, counting the beating of the Drum for another ship, fearing the survival of some one from that ship. Guilt was in his thought now — racking, tearing at him. But there was something more than that; what she had seen in him when he first caught sight of her was fear — fear of her, of Constance Sherrill.

He was fully aware, she now understood, that he had in a measure betrayed himself to her in Chicago; and he had hoped to cover up and to dissemble that betrayal with her. For that reason she was the last person in the world whom he wished to find here now.

"The point is," he said heavily, "why are you here?"

"I decided to come up last night."

"Obviously." He uttered the word slowly and with care. "Unless you came in a flying machine. Who came with you?"

"No one; I came alone. I expected to find father at Petoskey; he hadn't been there, so I came on here."

"After him?"

"No; after you, Henry."

"After me?" She had increased the apprehension in him, and he considered and scrutinized her before he ventured to go on. "Because you wanted to be up here with me, eh, Connie?"

"Of course not!"

"What's that?"

"Of course not!"

"I knew it!" he moved menacingly. She watched him quite without fear; fear was for him, she felt, not her. Often she had wished that she might have known him when he was a young man; now, she was aware that, in a way, she was having that wish. Under the surface of the man whose strength and determination she had admired, all the time had been this terror — this guilt. If Uncle Benny had carried it for a score of years, Henry had had it within him too. This had been within him all the time!

"You came up here about Ben Corvet?" he challenged.

"Yes — no!"

"Which do you mean?"

"No."

"I know then. For him, then — eh. For him!"

"For Alan Conrad? Yes," she said.

"I knew it!" he repeated. "He's been the trouble between you and me all the time!"

She made no denial of that; she had begun to know during the last two days that it was so.

"So you came to find him?" Henry went on.

"Yes, Henry. Have you any news?"

"News?"

"News of the boats?"

"News!" he iterated. "News to-night! No one'll have more'n one news to-night!"

From his slow, heavy utterance, a timbre of terrible satisfaction betrayed itself; his eyes widened a little as he saw it strike Constance, then his lids narrowed again. He had not meant to say it that way; yet, for an instant, satisfaction to him had become inseparable

from the saying, before that was followed by fright — the fright of examination of just what he had said or of what she had made of it.

"He'll be found!" she defied him.

"Be found?"

"Some are dead," she admitted, "but not all. Twenty are dead; but seven are not!"

She looked for confirmation to the Indian woman, who nodded: "Yes." He moved his head to face the woman, but his eyes, unmoving, remained fixed on Constance.

"Seven?" he echoed. "You say seven are not! How do you know?"

"The Drum has been beating for twenty, but not for more!" Constance said. Thirty hours before, when she had told Henry of the Drum, she had done it without belief herself, without looking for belief in him. But now, whether or not she yet believed or simply clung to the superstition for its shred of hope, it gave her a weapon to terrify him; for he believed — believed with all the unreasoning horror of his superstition and the terror of long-borne and hidden guilt.

"The Drum, Henry!" she repeated. "The Drum you've been listening to all day upon the beach — the Indian Drum that sounded for the dead of the *Miwaka;* sounded, one by one, for all who died! But it didn't sound for him! It's been sounding again, you know; but, again, it doesn't sound for him, Henry, not for him!"

"The *Miwaka!* What do you mean by that? What's that got to do with this?" His swollen face was thrust forward at her; there was threat against her in his tense muscles and his bloodshot eyes.

She did not shrink back from him, or move; and now he was not waiting for her answer. Something — a sound — had caught him about. Once it echoed, low in its reverberation but penetrating and quite distinct. It came, so far as direction could be assigned to it, from the trees toward the shore; but it was like no forest sound. Distinct too was it from any noise of the lake. It was like a Drum! Yet, when the echo had gone, it was a sensation easy to deny — a hallucination, that was all. But now, low and distinct it came again; and, as before, Constance saw it catch Henry and hold him. His lips moved, but he did not speak; he was counting. "Two," she saw his lips form.

The Indian woman passed them and opened the door, and now the sound, louder and more distinct, came again.

"The Drum!" she whispered, without looking about. "You hear? Three, I've heard. Now four! It will beat twenty; then we will know if more are dead!"

The door blew from the woman's hand, and snow, swept up from the drifts of the slope, swirled into the room; the draft blew the flame of the lamp in a smoky streak up the glass chimney and snuffed it out. The moonlight painted a rectangle on the floor; the moonlight gave a green, shimmering world without. Hurried spots of cloud shuttered away the moon for moments, casting shadows which swept raggedly up the slope from the shore. The woman seized the door and, tugging it about against the gale, she slammed it shut. She did not try at once to relight the lamp.

The sound of the Drum was continuing, the beats a few seconds apart. The opening of the door outside had seemed to Constance to make the beats come

louder and more distinct; but the closing of the door did not muffle them again. "Twelve," Constance counted to herself. The beats had seemed to be quite measured and regular at first; but now Constance knew that this was only roughly true; they beat rather in rhythm than at regular intervals. Two came close together and there was a longer wait before the next; then three sounded before the measure — a wild, leaping rhythm. She recalled having heard that the strangeness of Indian music to civilized ears was its time; the drums beat and rattles sounded in a different time from the song which they accompanied; there were even, in some dances, three different times contending for supremacy. Now this seemed reproduced in the strange, irregular sounding of the Drum; she could not count with certainty those beats. "Twenty — twenty-one — twenty-two!" Constance caught breath and waited for the next beat; the time of the interval between the measures of the rhythm passed, and still only the whistle of the wind and the undertone of water sounded. The Drum had beaten its roll and, for the moment, was done.

"Now it begins again," the woman whispered. "Always it waits and then it begins over."

Constance let go her breath; the next beat then would not mean another death. Twenty-two, had been her count, as nearly as she could count at all; the reckoning agreed with what the woman had heard. Two had died, then, since the Drum last had beat, when its roll was twenty. Two more than before; that meant five were left! Yet Constance, while she was appreciating this, strained forward, staring at Henry; she could not be certain, in the flickering shadows of the

cabin, of what she was seeing in him; still less, in the sudden stoppage of heart and breathing that it brought, could she find coherent answer to its meaning. But still it turned her weak, then spurred her with a vague and terrible impulse.

The Indian woman lifted the lamp chimney waveringly and scratched a match and, with unsteady hands, lighted the wick; Constance caught up her woolen hood from the table and put it on. Her action seemed to call Henry to himself.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"I'm going out."

He moved between her and the door. "Not alone, you're not!" His heavy voice had a deep tone of menace in it; he seemed to consider and decide something about her. "There's a farmhouse about a mile back; I'm going to take you over there and leave you with those people."

"I will not go there!"

He swore. "I'll carry you then!"

She shrank back from him as he lurched toward her with hands outstretched to seize her; he followed her, and she avoided him again; if his guilt and terror had given her mental ascendency over him, his physical strength could still force her to his will and, realizing the impossibility of evading him or overcoming him, she stopped.

"Not that!" she cried. "Don't touch me!"

"Come with me then!" he commanded; and he went to the door and laid his snowshoes on the snow and stepped into them, stooping and tightening the straps; he stood by while she put on hers. He did not attempt again to put hands upon her as they moved away from

the little cabin toward the woods back of the clearing; but went ahead, breaking the trail for her with his snowshoes. He moved forward slowly; he could travel, if he had wished, three feet to every two that she could cover, but he seemed not wishing for speed but rather for delay. They reached the trees; the hemlock and pine, black and swaying, shifted their shadows on the moonlit snow; bare maples and beeches, bent by the gale, creaked and cracked; now the hemlock was heavier. The wind, which wailed among the branches of the maples, hissed loudly in the needles of the hemlocks; snow swept from the slopes and whirled and drove about them, and she sucked it in with her breath. All through the wood were noises; a moaning came from a dark copse of pine and hemlock to their right, rose and died away; a wail followed — a whining, whimpering wail — so like the crying of a child that it startled her. Shadows seemed to detach themselves, as the trees swayed, to tumble from the boughs and scurry over the snow; they hid, as one looked at them, then darted on and hid behind the tree trunks.

Henry was barely moving; now he slowed still more. A deep, dull resonance was booming above the wood; it boomed again and ran into a rhythm. No longer was it above; at least it was not only above; it was all about them — here, there, to right and to left, before, behind — the booming of the Drum. Doom was the substance of that sound of the Drum beating the roll of the dead. Could there be abiding in the wood a consciousness which counted that roll? Constance fought the mad feeling that it brought. The sound must have some natural cause, she repeated to herself — waves washing in some strange conformation of the ice caves

on the shore, wind reverberating within some great hollow tree trunk as within the pipe of an organ. But Henry was not denying the Drum!

He had stopped in front of her, half turned her way; his body swayed and bent to the booming of the Drum, as his swollen lips counted its soundings. She could see him plainly in the moonlight, yet she drew nearer to him as she followed his count. "Twenty-one," he counted —"Twenty-two!" The Drum was still going on. "Twenty-four — twenty-five — twenty-six!" Would he count another?

He did not; and her pulses, which had halted, leaped with relief; and through her comprehension rushed. It was thus she had seen him counting in the cabin, but so vaguely that she had not been certain of it, but only able to suspect. Then the Drum had stopped short of twenty-six, but he had not stopped counting because of that; he had made the sounds twenty-six, when she and the woman had made them twenty-two; now he had reckoned them twenty-six, though the Drum, as she separated the sound from other noises, still went on!

He moved on again, descending the steep side of a little ravine, and she followed. One of his snowshoes caught in a protruding root and, instead of slowing to free it with care, he pulled it violently out, and she heard the dry, seasoned wood crack. He looked down, swore; saw that the wood was not broken through and went on; but as he reached the bottom of the slope, she leaped downward from a little height behind him and crashed down upon his trailing snowshoe just behind the heel. The rending snap of the wood came beneath her feet. Had she broken through his shoe or snapped her own? She sprang back, as he cried out and swung

in an attempt to grasp her; he lunged to follow her, and she ran a few steps away and stopped. At his next step, his foot entangled in the mesh of the broken snowshoe, and he stooped, cursing, to strip it off and hurl it from him; then he tore off the one from the other foot, and threw it away, and lurched after her again; but now he sank above his knees and floundered in the snow. She stood for a moment while the half-mad, half-drunken figure struggled toward her along the side of the ravine; then she ran to where the tree trunks hid her from him, but where she could look out from the shadow and see him. He gained the top of the slope and turned in the direction she had gone; assured then, apparently, that she had fled in fear of him, he started back more swiftly toward the beach. She followed, keeping out of his sight among the trees.

To twenty-six, he had counted — to twenty-six, each time! That told that he knew one was living among those who had been upon the ferry! The Drum — it was not easy to count with exactness those wild, irregularly leaping sounds; one might make of them almost what one wished — or feared! And if, in his terror here, Henry made the count twenty-six, it was because he knew — he knew that one was living! What one? It could only be one of two to dismay him so; there had been only two on the ferry whose rescue he had feared; only two who, living, he would have let lie upon this beach which he had chosen and set aside for his patrol, while he waited for him to die!

She forced herself on, unsparingly, as she saw Henry gain the shore and as, believing himself alone, he hurried northward. She went with him, paralleling his course among the trees. On the wind-swept ridges of

the ice, where there was little snow, he could travel for long stretches faster than she; she struggled to keep even with him, her lungs seared by the cold air as she gasped for breath. But she could not rest; she could not let herself be exhausted. Merciless minute after minute she raced him thus — A dark shape — a figure lay stretched upon the ice ahead! Beyond and still farther out, something which seemed the fragments of a lifeboat tossed up and down where the waves thundered and gleamed at the edge of the floe.

Henry's pace quickened; hers quickened desperately too. She left the shelter of the trees and scrambled down the steep pitch of the bluff, shouting, crying aloud. Henry turned about and saw her; he halted, and she passed him with a rush and got between him and the form upon the ice, before she turned and faced him.

Defeat — defeat of whatever frightful purpose he had had — was his now that she was there to witness what he might do; and in his realization of that, he burst out in oaths against her — He advanced; she stood, confronting — he swayed slightly in his walk and swung past her and away; he went past those things on the beach and kept on along the ice hummocks toward the north.

She ran to the huddled figure of the man in mackinaw and cap; his face was hidden partly by the position in which he lay and partly by the drifting snow; but, before she swept the snow away and turned him to her, she knew that he was Alan.

She cried to him and, when he did not answer, she shook him to get him awake; but she could not rouse him. Praying in wild whispers to herself, she opened

his jacket and felt within his clothes; he was warm — at least he was not frozen within! No; and there seemed some stir of his heart! She tried to lift him, to carry him; then to drag him. But she could not; he fell from her arms into the snow again, and she sat down, pulling him upon her lap and clasping him to her.

She must have aid, she must get him to some house, she must take him out of the terrible cold; but dared she leave him? Might Henry return, if she went away? She arose and looked about. Far up the shore she saw his figure rising and falling with his flight over the rough ice. A sound came to her too, the low, deep reverberation of the Drum beating once more along the shore and in the woods and out upon the lake; and it seemed to her that Henry's figure, in the stumbling steps of its flight, was keeping time to the wild rhythm of that sound. And she stooped to Alan and covered him with her coat, before leaving him; for she feared no longer Henry's return.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FATE OF THE "MIWAKA"

"SO this isn't your house, Judah?"

"No, Alan; this is an Indian's house, but it is not mine. It is Adam Enos' house. He and his wife went somewhere else when you needed this."

"He helped to bring me here then?"

"No, Alan. They were alone here — she and Adam's wife. When she found you, they brought you here — more than a mile along the beach. Two women!"

Alan choked as he put down the little porcupine quill box which had started this line of inquiry. Whatever questions he had asked of Judah or of Sherrill these last few days had brought him very quickly back to her. Moved by some intuitive certainty regarding Spearman, she had come north; she had not thought of peril to herself; she had struggled alone across dangerous ice in storm — a girl brought up as she had been! She had found him — Alan — with life almost extinct upon the beach; she and the Indian woman, Wassaquam had just said, had brought him along the shore. How had they managed that, he wondered; they had somehow got him to this house which, in his ignorance of exactly where he was upon the mainland, he had thought must be Wassaquam's; she had gone to get help — His

throat closed up, and his eyes filled as he thought of this.

In the week during which he had been cared for here, Alan had not seen Constance; but there had been a peculiar and exciting alteration in Sherrill's manner toward him, he had felt; it was something more than merely liking for him that Sherrill had showed, and Sherrill had spoken of her to him as Constance, not, as he had called her always before, "Miss Sherrill" or "my daughter." Alan had had dreams which had seemed impossible of fulfilment, of dedicating his life and all that he could make of it to her; now Sherrill's manner had brought to him something like awe, as of something quite incredible.

When he had believed that disgrace was his — disgrace because he was Benjamin Corvet's son — he had hidden, or tried to hide, his feeling toward her; he knew now that he was not Corvet's son; Spearman had shot his father, Corvet had said. But he could not be certain yet who his father was or what revelation regarding himself might now be given. Could he dare to betray that he was thinking of Constance as — as he could not keep from thinking? He dared not without daring to dream that Sherrill's manner meant that she could care for him; and that he could not presume. What she had undergone for him — her venture alone up the beach and that dreadful contest which had taken place between her and Spearman — must remain circumstances which he had learned but from which he could not yet take conclusions.

He turned to the Indian.

"Has anything more been heard of Spearman, Judah?"

"Only this, Alan; he crossed the Straits the next day upon the ferry there. In Mackinaw City he bought liquor at a bar and took it with him; he asked there about trains into the northwest. He has gone, leaving all he had. What else could he do?"

Alan crossed the little cabin and looked out the window over the snow-covered slope, where the bright sun was shining. It was very still without; there was no motion at all in the pines toward the ice-bound shore; and the shadow of the wood smoke rising from the cabin chimney made almost a straight line across the snow. Snow had covered any tracks that there had been upon the beach where those who had been in the boat with him had been found dead. He had known that this must be; he had believed them beyond aid when he had tried for the shore to summon help for them and for himself. The other boat, which had carried survivors of the wreck, blown farther to the south, had been able to gain the shore of North Fox Island; and as these men had not been so long exposed before they were brought to shelter, four men lived. Sherrill had told him their names; they were the mate, the assistant engineer, a deckhand and Father Perron, the priest who had been a passenger but who had stayed with the crew till the last. Benjamin Corvet had perished in the wreckage of the cars.

As Alan went back to his chair, the Indian watched him and seemed not displeased.

"You feel good now, Alan?" Wassaquam asked.

"Almost like myself, Judah."

"That is right then. It was thought you would be like that to-day." He looked at the long shadows and

at the height of the early morning sun, estimating the time of day. "A sled is coming soon now."

"We're going to leave here, Judah?"

"Yes, Alan."

Was he going to see her then? Excitement stirred him, and he turned to Wassaquam to ask that; but suddenly he hesitated and did not inquire.

Wassaquam brought the mackinaw and cap which Alan had worn on Number 25; he took from the bed the new blankets which had been furnished by Sherrill. They waited until a farmer appeared driving a team hitched to a low, wide-runnered sled. The Indian settled Alan on the sled, and they drove off.

The farmer looked frequently at Alan with curious interest; the sun shone down, dazzling, and felt almost warm in the still air. Wassaquam, with regard for the frostbite from which Alan had been suffering, bundled up the blankets around him; but Alan put them down reassuringly. They traveled south along the shore, rounded into Little Traverse Bay, and the houses of Harbor Point appeared among their pines. Alan could see plainly that these were snow-weighted and boarded up without sign of occupation; but he saw that the Sherrill house was open; smoke rose from the chimney, and the windows winked with the reflection of a red blaze within. He was so sure that this was their destination that he started to throw off the robes.

"Nobody there now," Wassaquam indicated the house. "At Petoskey; we go on there."

The sled proceeded across the edge of the bay to the little city; even before leaving the bay ice, Alan saw Constance and her father; they were walking at the water front near to the railway station, and they

came out on the ice as they recognized the occupants of the sled.

Alan felt himself alternately weak and roused to strength as he saw her. The sled halted and, as she approached, he stepped down. Their eyes encountered, and hers looked away; a sudden shyness, which sent his heart leaping, had come over her. He wanted to speak to her, to make some recognition to her of what she had done, but he did not dare to trust his voice; and she seemed to understand that. He turned to Sherrill instead. An engine and tender coupled to a single car stood at the railway station.

"We're going to Chicago?" he inquired of Sherrill.

"Not yet, Alan — to St. Ignace. Father Perron — the priest, you know — went to St. Ignace as soon as he recovered from his exposure. He sent word to me that he wished to see me at my convenience; I told him that we would go to him as soon as you were able."

"He sent no other word than that?"

"Only that he had a very grave communication to make to us."

Alan did not ask more; at mention of Father Perron he had seemed to feel himself once more among the crashing, charging freight cars on the ferry and to see Benjamin Corvet, pinned amid the wreckage and speaking into the ear of the priest.

Father Perron, walking up and down upon the docks close to the railway station at St. Ignace, where the tracks end without bumper or blocking of any kind above the waters of the lake, was watching south directly across the Straits. It was mid-afternoon and

the ice-crusher *Ste. Marie*, which had been expected at St. Ignace about this time, was still some four miles out. During the storm of the week before, the floes had jammed into that narrow neck between the great lakes of Michigan and Huron until, men said, the Straits were ice-filled to the bottom; but the *Ste. Marie* and the *St. Ignace* had plied steadily back and forth.

Through a stretch where the ice-crusher now was the floes had changed position, or new ice was blocking the channel; for the *Ste. Marie*, having stopped, was backing; now her funnels shot forth fresh smoke, and she charged ahead. The priest clenched his hands as the steamer met the shock and her third propeller — the one beneath her bow — sucked the water out from under the floe and left it without support; she met the ice barrier, crashed some of it aside; she broke through, recoiled, halted, charged, climbed up the ice and broke through again. As she drew nearer now in her approach, the priest walked back toward the railway station.

It was not merely a confessional which Father Perron had taken from the lips of the dying man on Number 25; it was an accusation of crime against another man as well; and the confession and accusation both had been made, not only to gain forgiveness from God, but to right terrible wrongs. If the confession left some things unexplained, it did not lack confirmation; the priest had learned enough to be certain that it was no hallucination of madness. He had been charged definitely to repeat what had been told him to the persons he was now going to meet; so he watched expectantly as the *Ste. Marie* made its landing. A train of freight cars was upon the ferry, but a single

passenger coach was among them, and the switching engine brought this off first. A tall, handsome man whom Father Perron thought must be the Mr. Sherrill with whom he had communicated appeared upon the car platform; the young man from Number 25 followed him, and the two helped down a young and beautiful girl.

They recognized the priest by his dress and came toward him at once.

"Mr. Sherrill?" Father Perron inquired.

Sherrill assented, taking the priest's hand and introducing his daughter.

"I am glad to see you safe, Mr. Stafford." The priest had turned to Alan. "We have thanks to offer up for that, you and I!"

"I am his son, then! I thought that must be so."

Alan trembled at the priest's sign of confirmation. There was no shock of surprise in this; he had suspected ever since August, when Captain Stafford's watch and the wedding ring had so strangely come to Constance, that he might be Stafford's son. His inquiries had brought him, at that time, to St. Ignace, as Father Perron's had brought him now; but he had not been able to establish proof of any connection between himself and the baby son of Captain Stafford who had been born in that town.

He looked at Constance, as they followed the priest to the motor which was waiting to take them to the house of old Father Benitot, whose guest Father Perron was; she was very quiet. What would that grave statement which Father Perron was to make to them mean to him — to Alan? Would further knowledge about that father whom he had not known, but whose

blood was his and whose name he now must bear, bring pride or shame to him?

A bell was tolling somewhere, as they followed the priest into Father Benitot's small, bare room which had been prepared for their interview. Father Perron went to a desk and took therefrom some notes which he had made. He did not seem, as he looked through these notes, to be refreshing his memory; rather he seemed to be seeking something which the notes did not supply; for he put them back and reclosed the desk.

"What I have," he said, speaking more particularly to Sherrill, "is the terrible, not fully coherent statement of a dying man. It has given me names — also it has given me facts. But isolated. It does not give what came before or what came after; therefore, it does not make plain. I hope that, as Benjamin Corvet's partner, you can furnish what I lack."

"What is it you want to know?" Sherrill asked.

"What were the relations between Benjamin Corvet and Captain Stafford?"

Sherrill thought a moment.

"Corvet," he replied, "was a very able man; he had insight and mental grasp — and he had the fault which sometimes goes with those, a hesitancy of action. Stafford was an able man too, considerably younger than Corvet. We, ship owners of the lakes, have not the world to trade in, Father Perron, as they have upon the sea; if you observe our great shipping lines you will find that they have, it would seem, apportioned among themselves the traffic of the lakes; each line has its own connections and its own ports. But this did not come through agreement, but through conflict; the strong have survived and made a division of

the traffic; the weak have died. Twenty years ago, when this conflict of competing interests was at its height, Corvet was the head of one line, Stafford was head of another, and the two lines had very much the same connections and competed for the same cargoes."

"I begin to see!" Father Perron exclaimed. "Please go on."

"In the early nineties both lines still were young; Stafford had, I believe, two ships; Corvet had three."

"So few? Yes; it grows plainer!"

"In 1894, Stafford managed a stroke which, if fate had not intervened, must have assured the ultimate extinction of Corvet's line or its absorption into Stafford's. Stafford gained as his partner Franklin Ramsdell, a wealthy man whom he had convinced that the lake traffic offered chances of great profit; and this connection supplied him with the capital whose lack had been hampering him, as it was still hampering Corvet. The new firm — Stafford and Ramsdell — projected the construction, with Ramsdell's money, of a number of great steel freighters. The first of these — the *Miwaka*, a test ship whose experience was to guide them in the construction of the rest — was launched in the fall of 1895, and was lost on its maiden trip with both Stafford and Ramsdell aboard. The Stafford and Ramsdell interests could not survive the death of both owners and disappeared from the lakes. Is this what you wanted to know?"

The priest nodded. Alan leaned tensely forward, watching; what he had heard seemed to have increased and deepened the priest's feeling over what he had to tell and to have aided his comprehension of it.

"His name was Caleb Stafford," Father Perron began. "(This is what Benjamin Corvet told to me, when he was dying under the wreckage on the ferry.) 'He was as fair and able a man as the lakes ever knew. I had my will of most men in the lake trade in those days; but I could not have my will of him. With all the lakes to trade in, he had to pick out for his that traffic which I already had chosen for my own. But I fought him fair, Father — I fought him fair, and I would have continued to do that to the end.

"'I was at Manistee, Father, in the end of the season — December fifth of 1895. The ice had begun to form very early that year and was already bad; there was cold and a high gale. I had laid up one of my ships at Manistee, and I was crossing that night upon a tug to Manitowoc, where another was to be laid up. I had still a third one lading upon the northern peninsula at Manistique for a last trip which, if it could be made, would mean a good profit from a season which so far, because of Stafford's competition, had been only fair. After leaving Manistee, it grew still more cold, and I was afraid the ice would close in on her and keep her where she was, so I determined to go north that night and see that she got out. None knew, Father, except those aboard the tug, that I had made that change.

"'At midnight, Father, to westward of the Foxes, we heard the four blasts of a steamer in distress — the four long blasts which have sounded in my soul ever since! We turned toward where we saw the steamer's lights; we went nearer and, Father, it was his great, new ship — the *Miwaka!* We had heard two days before that she had passed the Soo; we had

not known more than that of where she was. She had broken her new shaft, Father, and was intact except for that, but helpless in the rising sea . . .'"

The priest broke off. "The *Miwaka!* I did not understand all that that had meant to him until just now — the new ship of the rival line, whose building meant for him failure and defeat!

"There is no higher duty than the rescue of those in peril at sea. He — Benjamin Corvet, who told me this — swore to me that, at the beginning none upon the tug had any thought except to give aid. A small line was drifted down to the tug and to this a hawser was attached which they hauled aboard. There happened then the first of those events which led those upon the tug into doing a great wrong. He — Benjamin Corvet — had taken charge of the wheel of the tug; three men were handling the hawser in ice and washing water at the stern. The whistle accidentally blew, which those on the *Miwaka* understood to mean that the hawser had been secured, so they drew in the slack; the hawser, tightened unexpectedly by the pitching of the sea, caught and crushed the captain and deckhand of the tug and threw them into the sea.

"Because they were short-handed now upon the tug, and also because consultation was necessary over what was to be done, the young owner of the *Miwaka*, Captain Stafford, came down the hawser onto the tug after the line had been put straight. He came to the wheelhouse, where Benjamin Corvet was, and they consulted. Then Benjamin Corvet learned that the other owner was aboard the new ship as well — Ramsdell — the man whose money you have just told me had built this and was soon to build other ships. I did not un-

derstand before why learning that affected him so much.

"'Stafford wanted us' (this is what Benjamin Corvet said) 'to tow him up the lake; I would not do that, but I agreed to tow him to Manistique. The night was dark, Father — no snow, but frightful wind which had been increasing until it now sent the waves washing clear across the tug. We had gone north an hour when, low upon the water to my right, I saw a light, and there came to me the whistling of a buoy which told me that we were passing nearer than I would have wished, even in daytime, to windward of Boulder Reef. There are, Father, no people on that reef; its sides of ragged rock go straight down forty fathoms into the lake.

"'I looked at the man with me in the wheelhouse — at Stafford — and hated him! I put my head out at the wheelhouse door and looked back at the lights at the new, great steamer, following safe and straight at the end of its towline. I thought of my two men upon the tug who had been crushed by clumsiness of those on board that ship; and how my own ships had had a name for never losing a man and that name would be lost now because of the carelessness of Stafford's men! And the sound of the shoal brought the evil thought to me. Suppose I had not happened across his ship; would it have gone upon some reef like this and been lost? I thought that if now the hawser should break, I would be rid of that ship and perhaps of the owner who was on board as well. We could not pick up the tow line again so close to the reef. The steamer would drift down upon the rocks —'"

Father Perron hesitated an instant. "I bear wit-

ness," he said solemnly, "that Benjamin Corvet assured me — his priest — that it was only a thought; the evil act which it suggested was something which he would not do or even think of doing. But he spoke something of what was in his mind to Stafford, for he said:

"'I must look like a fool to you to keep on towing your ship!'

"They stared, he told me, into one another's eyes, and Stafford grew uneasy.

"'We'd have been all right,' he answered, 'until we had got help, if you'd left us where we were!' He too listened to the sound of the buoy and of the water dashing on the shoal. 'You are taking us too close,' he said —'too close!' He went aft then to look at the tow line."

Father Perron's voice ceased; what he had to tell now made his face whiten as he arranged it in his memory. Alan leaned forward a little and then, with an effort, sat straight. Constance turned and gazed at him; but he dared not look at her. He felt her hand warm upon his; it rested there a moment and moved away.

"There was a third man in the wheelhouse when these things were spoken," Father Perron said, "the mate of the ship which had been laid up at Manistee."

"Henry Spearman," Sherrill supplied.

"That is the name. Benjamin Corvet told me of that man that he was young, determined, brutal, and set upon getting position and wealth for himself by any means. He watched Corvet and Stafford while they were speaking, and he too listened to the shoal until Stafford had come back; then he went aft.

"'I looked at him, Father,' Benjamin Corvet said to me, 'and I let him go — not knowing. He came back and looked at me once more, and went again to the stern; Stafford had been watching him as well as I, and he sprang away from me now and scrambled after him. The tug leaped suddenly; there was no longer any tow holding it back, for the hawser had parted; and I knew, Father, the reason was that Spearman had cut it!

"'I rang for the engine to be slowed, and I left the wheel and went aft; some struggle was going on at the stern of the tug; a flash came from there and the cracking of a shot. Suddenly all was light about me as, aware of the breaking of the hawser and alarmed by the shot, the searchlight of the *Miwaka* turned upon the tug. The cut end of the hawser was still upon the tug, and Spearman had been trying to clear this when Stafford attacked him; they fought, and Stafford struck Spearman down. He turned and cried out against me — accusing me of having ordered Spearman to cut the line. He held up the cut end toward Ramsdell on the *Miwaka* and cried out to him and showed by pointing that it had been cut. Blood was running from the hand with which he pointed, for he had been shot by Spearman; and now again and a second and a third time, from where he lay upon the deck, Spearman fired. The second of those shots killed the engineer who had rushed out where I was on the deck; the third shot went through Stafford's head. The *Miwaka* was drifting down upon the reef; her whistle sounded again and again the four long blasts. The fireman, who had followed the engineer up from below, fawned on me! I was safe for all of him, he said; I could trust Luke —

Luke would not tell! He too thought I had ordered the doing of that thing!

"'From the *Miwaka*, Ramsdell yelled curses at me, threatening me for what he thought that I had done! I looked at Spearman as he got up from the deck, and I read the thought that had been in him; he had believed that he could cut the hawser in the dark, none seeing, and that our word that it had been broken would have as much strength as any accusation Stafford could make. He had known that to share a secret such as that with me would "make" him on the lakes; for the loss of the *Miwaka* would cripple Stafford and Ramsdell and strengthen me; and he could make me share with him whatever success I made. But Stafford had surprised him at the hawser and had seen.

"'I moved to denounce him, Father, as I realized this; I moved — but stopped. He had made himself safe against accusation by me! None — none ever would believe that he had done this except by my order, if he should claim that; and he made plain that he was going to claim that. He called me a fool and defied me. Luke — even my own man, the only one left on the tug with us — believed it! And there was murder in it now, with Stafford dying there upon the deck and with the certainty that all those on the *Miwaka* could not be saved. I felt the noose as if it had been already tied about my neck! And I had done no wrong, Father! I had only thought wrong!

"'So long as one lived among those on the *Miwaka* who had seen what was done, I knew I would be hanged; yet I would have saved them if I could. But, in my comprehension of what this meant, I only stared at Stafford where he lay and then at Spearman, and I let

him get control of the tug. The tug, whose wheel I had lashed, heading her into the waves, had been moving slowly. Spearman pushed me aside and went to the wheelhouse; he sent Luke to the engines, and from that moment Luke was his. He turned the tug about to where we still saw the lights of the *Miwaka*. The steamer had struck upon the reef; she hung there for a time; and Spearman — he had the wheel and Luke, at his orders, was at the engine — held the tug off and we beat slowly to and fro until the *Miwaka* slipped off and sank. Some had gone down with her, no doubt; but two boats had got off, carrying lights. They saw the tug approaching and cried out and stretched their hands to us; but Spearman stopped the tug. They rowed towards us then, but when they got near, Spearman moved the tug away from them, and then again stopped. They cried out again and rowed toward us; again he moved the tug away, and then they understood and stopped rowing and cried curses at us. One boat soon drifted far away; we knew of its capsizing by the extinguishing of its light. The other capsized near to where we were. Those in it who had no lifebelts and could not swim, sank first. Some could swim and, for a while they fought the waves.' "

Alan, as he listened, ceased consciously to separate the priest's voice from the sensations running through him. His father was Stafford, dying at Corvet's feet while Corvet watched the death of the crew of the *Miwaka;* Alan himself, a child, was floating with a lifebelt among those struggling in the water whom Spearman and Corvet were watching die. Memory; was it that which now had come to him? No; rather it was

a realization of all the truths which the priest's words were bringing together and arranging rightly for him.

He, a child, saved by Corvet from the water because he could not bear witness, seemed to be on that tug, sea-swept and clad in ice, crouching beside the form of his father while Corvet stood aghast — Corvet, still hearing the long blasts of distress from the steamer which was gone, still hearing the screams of the men who were drowned. Then, when all were gone who could tell, Spearman turned the tug to Manitowoc. . . . Now again the priest's voice became audible to Alan.

Alan's father died in the morning. All day they stayed out in the storm, avoiding vessels. They dared not throw Stafford's body overboard or that of the engineer, because, if found, the bullet holes would have aroused inquiry. When night came again, they had taken the two ashore at some wild spot and buried them; to make identification harder, they had taken the things that they had with them and buried them somewhere else. The child — Alan — Corvet had smuggled ashore and sent away; he had told Spearman later that the child had died.

"Peace — rest!" Father Perron said in a deep voice. "Peace to the dead!"

But for the living there had been no peace. Spearman had forced Corvet to make him his partner; Corvet had tried to take up his life again, but had not been able. His wife, aware that something was wrong with him, had learned enough so that she had left him. Luke had come and come and come again for blackmail, and Corvet had paid him. Corvet grew rich; those connected with him prospered; but with Corvet

lived always the ghosts of those he had watched die with the *Miwaka* — of those who would have prospered with Stafford except for what had been done. Corvet had secretly sought and followed the fate of the kin of those people who had been murdered to benefit him; he found some of their families destroyed; he found almost all poor and struggling. And though Corvet paid Luke to keep the crime from disclosure, yet Corvet swore to himself to confess it all and make such restitution as he could. But each time that the day he had appointed with himself arrived, he put it off and off and paid Luke again and again. Spearman knew of his intention and sometimes kept him from it. But Corvet had made one close friend; and when that friend's daughter, for whom Corvet cared now most of all in the world, had been about to marry Spearman, Corvet defied the cost to himself, and he gained strength to oppose Spearman. So he had written to Stafford's son to come; he had prepared for confession and restitution; but, after he had done this and while he waited, something had seemed to break in his brain; too long preyed upon by terrible memories, and the ghosts of those who had gone, and by the echo of their voices crying to him from the water, Corvet had wandered away; he had come back, under the name of one of those whom he had wronged, to the lake life from which he had sprung. Only now and then, for a few hours, he had intervals when he remembered all; in one of these he had dug up the watch and the ring and other things which he had taken from Captain Stafford's pockets and written to himself directions of what to do with them, when his mind again failed.

And for Spearman, strong against all that assailed

Corvet, there had been always the terror of the Indian Drum — the Drum which had beat short for the *Miwaka*, the Drum which had known that one was saved! That story came from some hint which Luke had spread, Corvet thought; but Spearman, born near by, the Drum, believed that the Drum had known and that the Drum had tried to tell; all through the years Spearman had dreaded the Drum which had tried to betray him.

So it was by the Drum that, in the end, Spearman was broken.

The priest's voice had stopped, as Alan slowly realized; he heard Sherrill's voice speaking to him.

"It was a trust that he left you, Alan; I thought it must be that — a trust for those who suffered by the loss of your father's ship. I don't know yet how it can be fulfilled; and we must think of that."

"That's how I understand it," Alan said.

Fuller consciousness of what Father Perron's story meant to him was flowing through him now. Wrong, great wrong there had been, as he had known there must be; but it had not been as he had feared, for he and his had been among the wronged ones. The name — the new name that had come to him — he knew what that must be: Robert Alan Stafford; and there was no shadow on it. He was the son of an honest man and a good woman; he was clean and free; free to think as he was thinking now of the girl beside him; and to hope that she was thinking so of him.

Through the tumult in his soul he became aware of physical feelings again, and of Sherrill's hand put upon his shoulder in a cordial, friendly grasp. Then another hand, small and firm, touched his, and he felt its

warm, tightening grasp upon his fingers; he looked up, and his eyes filled and hers, he saw, were brimming too.

They walked together, later in the day, up the hill to the small, white house which had been Caleb Stafford's. Alan had seen the house before but, not knowing then whether the man who had owned it had or had not been his father, he had merely looked at it from the outside. There had been a small garden filled with flowers before it then; now yard and roofs were buried deep in snow. The woman who came to the door was willing to show them through the house; it had only five rooms. One of those upon the second floor was so much larger and pleasanter than the rest that they became quite sure that it was the one in which Alan had been born, and where his young mother soon afterward had died.

They were very quiet as they stood looking about.

"I wish we could have known her," Constance said.

The woman, who had showed them about, had gone to another room and left them alone.

"There seems to have been no picture of her and nothing of hers left here that any one can tell me about; but," Alan choked, "it's good to be able to think of her as I can now."

"I know," Constance said. "When you were away, I used to think of you as finding out about her and — and I wanted to be with you. I'm glad I'm with you now, though you don't need me any more!"

"Not need you!"

"I mean — no one can say anything against her now!"

Alan drew nearer her, trembling.

"I can never thank you — I can never tell you what you did for me, believing in — her and in me, no matter how things looked. And then, coming up here as you did — for me!"

"Yes, it was for you, Alan!"

"Constance!" He caught her. She let him hold her; then, still clinging to him, she put him a little away.

"The night before you came to the Point last summer, Alan, he — he had just come and asked me again. I'd promised; but we motored that evening to his place and — there were sunflowers there, and I knew that night I couldn't love him."

"Because of the sunflowers?"

"Sunflower houses, Alan, they made me think of; do you remember?"

"Remember!"

The woman was returning to them now and, perhaps, it was as well; for not yet, he knew, could he ask her all that he wished; what had happened was too recent yet for that. But to him, Spearman — half mad and fleeing from the haunts of men — was beginning to be like one who had never been; and he knew she shared this feeling. The light in her deep eyes was telling him already what her answer to him would be; and life stretched forth before him full of love and happiness and hope.

THE END

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